

5. H. Clough. Sr. George's. March 1924.



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"WHAT MEAN YE BY THESE STONES?"

SUGGESTIONS TO READERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY

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LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NEW YORK AND TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN CO.

Printed in Great Britain

THE CHURCHMAN'S POPULAR LIBRARY

- "WHAT MEAN YE BY THESE STONES?" Suggestions to readers of the Old Testament. By J. M. C. CRUM, M.A.
- DEATH AND THE HEREAFTER. By HENRY LOWTHER CLARKE, D.D., formerly Archbishop of Melbourne,
- A RELIGION FOR MONDAY MORN-ING. By K. E. Maclean, B.A.

Each, is. net. (Others in preparation).

London: S.P.C.K.

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"WHAT MEAN YE BY THESE STONES?"

CHAPTER I.—IN THE BEGINNING

A great while ago the world began, With hey, ho, the winde and the raine.

THE Bible begins with the first week of the world.

And on the first Friday God created man.

And the first man was given a garden to work in.

And the first man's firstborn son slew his brother,

and then went away and builded a city.

The writer was someone who took for granted that there had always been gardens and mortal religious quarrels and town life, but we know, now, that such civilisation did not come as early as that in the story of the human race. And so the Bible itself seems to warn us that we must, from the outset, form some opinion as to the kind of truth we shall look for, when we open it.

Much of Genesis may be read with the same kind of curiosity as the stories which men find now, written in queer lettering, on the old baked clay of Nineveh. But if you notice the differences, another mood comes in:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

The Babylonian stories, too, told of a watery abyss, which, at the making of the world, was divided in two. It became a liquid height above and a liquid depth below, waters divided from waters, and, between them, earth.

But the Jewish story is of One God who created

these things. The Babylonian story is of many gods who grew, somehow, out of them, and then fell to quarrelling.

In the Jewish story, as you watch that dark watery world, a breath stirs, like a breath of air ruffling the surface of a still mere. And behold, it is God's

" spirit."

At the risk of failing to honour where honour is due, modern men have to decide whether there is not to be recognised, here, something in the Jewish story which is truer than anything in the Babylonian story. suppose, if the Babylonian story will do just as well as the Jewish, then all religion is reduced to an absurdity. If all-things-that-are could evolve themselves out of a watery abyss, if lives and minds and wills and spirits could evolve themselves out of a soulless pool, then reverence for any Sacred Scriptures is a mistake.

Curiously enough, people need to be reminded that the comparison is not between Genesis and some modern work on Geology. The comparison is between the Hebrew and the Babylonian stories. And as you read Genesis, you are aware of some prophetic man making room, in a materialistic story, for a spiritual view of the Creation. He has spoken in very simple words, of God saying, "Let there be" earth and sea and sky and light. And he has spoken, too, of the Spirit of God

moving earth and sea and sky and light to be.

God is over His world. And also God is in His world. God is commanding. And also God is inspiring the obedience which can answer His command. So that, in his view, there is something spiritual in the answer of the light which, when it is called, comes in. There is something spiritual in the dry land and the seas which, when they are summoned, appear. And in the grass and the corn and the trees, and in the birds and fish and cattle, there is something spiritual in the answering life, as well as in the Will which said to them: "Live."

Long ago, now, I was at a lecture, in which it was explained that the life of rabbits and kittens and lambs and boys and girls could be traced back and back to very simple beginnings. The lecture traced them back, and "in the beginning" there was the simplest living cell.

It was a very primitive creature, that first cell. We were told what it could do. And it could do very little more than some drop of gummy jelly of the same size could do. But it was alive. It could "react to a stimulus."

It was the beginning. But what it began, went on. It evolved. Its life opened out into all kinds of higher lives. A thing like that might some day become a dog, an ape. It might even aspire so high as to evolve into you—you, the courteous reader of these words, or me, the industrious writer of them.

In the beginning man was this. Here is the biological substitute for our Mother Eve. And to it was given the Greek name "amœba." As people gaze at Michael Angelo's famous picture of Eve, I gaze at this amœbacell. Its characteristic is that it reacts to stimulus. The lower creations do not. This does. That is its difference.

The lifeless creatures are quite impassive. If you do not push them, they stay where they are. If you do push them, they go on for ever and ever till something else stops them. An inferior cell among a crowd of cells would go with the crowd. But this amœba is different. It is more like a human being in a human crowd. It reacts. And it reacts according to its own nature.

If one member of a human crowd elbows another, you cannot tell how the other will react. He may shrink away disgusted from his elbowing neighbour much farther than the neighbour pushed him. He may retaliate with a violence which much more than counteracts his elbowing neighbour's push. Either way he is not impassive. He reacts to the stimulus. An amœba has something of this nature. Our Mother Amœba reacts to stimulus.

And some of us think that if you grant this idea of an amœba as a beginning: if, from the beginning, you bear in mind of what it is the beginning: if you bear in mind, all the time, what is involved in this living cell, and what it can evolve into: our amœba is seen to be a very spiritual mother. It is like the "flower in the crannied wall," of which Tennyson made his six lines. "I pluck you out of the crannies." You're very small, and all that. But if I could understand how you live in the wall, and how the wall keeps you alive, "all in all," "I should know what God and man is."

There is William Blake's wish attained:

To see a World in a grain of sand, And a Heaven in a Wild Flower.

For the cell and its circumstances, the reacting and the stimulating, imply all sorts of ideas for which there is no room in a materialistic world.

If a creature which begins to "react to stimulus" has set out on a journey which leads away on to what we are, then "reacting to stimulus" is a great mystery. You cannot isolate the bare "reaction" of the amœba and the bare "stimulus" of its circumstances as they are revealed under your microscope. You must see in them that which they have begun. You are watching, there, something which will not allow your mind to stop short of a view of all the living world reacting to the life-giving Will of God. And human life is a response to His quickening. And human love is a reflection of His love. The world is an inspired answer to the Spirit of God which speaks to it.

You begin with these two hypotheses, "stimulus" and "reaction," and the more unbroken the evolution from lowest beginning to highest end is proved to be, the more inevitably you will find yourself being led on into the view of creation at which St. Paul has arrived

in Romans viii. 26, 27:

"And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that

searcheth the heart [the Father] knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he [the Spirit] maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

So far has the amœba which became St. Paul evolved. As it has become more and more capable of reacting, the stimulus has become more and more stimulating. The creation evolves from movement resulting from force, to reaction responding to stimulus, to mind answering mind, to love reflecting Love, to man's spirit in the presence of the Father of spirits. I find all the Christian Faith "involved" in this amœba-view. It is implied as an oak-tree life is folded and hidden in an acorn.

"I believe in God the Father."

"And I believe in the Son," who, as the Beloved Son, answers the Father. The Holy Ghost descends on Him: the Filial Spirit.

"And I believe in the Holy Ghost: the Giver of Life."

All this evolving life is His.

"Who spake by the prophets." He inspires religion from its dim beginnings on and up to clearest revelation.

"The Spirit of Adoption." He wakes in the hearts of men the sense of their having a Father in heaven, and the will to walk as His "dear children."

To see the "amœba" "evolving" from so low a

beginning to so high a life is to see all the world as

spiritual.

For, in the light of it, you will constantly be remembering that you can never estimate the values of a beginning until you can guess of what it is the beginning.

If an amœba is going to evolve into a human life, for example, you do not understand what that amœba "is," until you begin to see what "it has it in it" to become.

Other amœbas are going to become "mice and rats and such small deer." This one has a quite different value. This may be indistinguishable from the others. But the event proves it to be distinct.

Nothing could mislead you more than to think of life as confined to a lower level than that to which it is

to attain. Nothing could be more mistaken than to belittle the distinctions because it is still impossible to distinguish them. A thing (in this view of the world) is what "it has it in it" to be.

A skylark's nest of eggs means the skylarks that are to be. You will not say of the song in the sky: After all, it is only an egg which has happened to hatch out into this! On the contrary, you will wonder, as you look at small brown eggs, that in them can lie, folded in silence, such soaring and such song. As the skylark mounts up you will feel: So then, this is what that nest on the ground had for its secret!

So, in all evolution, it is not the obscure parentage that matters, it is the worth of the sons and daughters which proves what the family is. Who will honour David the less because Ruth was only a gleaner? Israel will remember the story of Ruth because from the barefoot girl came a long line of sceptred Kings.

Yet the thought of evolution has tempted men to think meanly of men. Why should it? If the human mind traces its origin to ape-like beginnings, it is still the human mind. I will not mistrust human thought on account of any of those old low foreheads and great mouths and teeth of our long-armed, short-legged ancestors. I will honour my fathers and my mothers still. I will say: Was it not wonderful that, in the company of apes, and scarcely distinguishable from apes, there were those creatures which, for all their ape-likeness, were not apes, nor the ancestors of apes, but were the ape-like ancestors of men? My "thinking" reflects back a wonder on their obscure meanings. The enigma which they were, casts no suspicion on my human mind.

Indeed, you can hardly speak more untruly of my ancestors than when you call them apes. They were not distinguishable, but they were distinct from apes.

The event has proved that "apes" is just what they escaped from being. To the apes, no doubt, the distinction is quite uninteresting. To me few things are of more interest than distinctions such as this.

And other distinctions of the same kind keep emerging into view as the evolution proceeds. And the same

kind of confusions, too.

You come to thinking of religions; or, again, of Semitic religions. And there is a time in the story of the Hebrew religion when it is scarcely distinguishable from Arab or Moabite or Amorite or Phænician religions, perhaps. At such a time, the question is, not What does the Hebrew religion look like now? but, What has the Hebrew religion in it, which these other religions have not? What is it becoming, which these others will never become? The ill-advised mood is that which thinks meanly of the Hebrew religion because it was once, perhaps, indistinguishable from its neighbours. It will be juster to reverence what it once was, because, hidden in that little obscure faith, there lay the faculty to become what, later, it became.

And this juster view is always needed. Let me use it once more in one more connection, and so get on to

my subject.

Sceptics have thought that they quite understood the vision of St. Paul on the Damascus road. Of course, it was only one more of those delusions that people have. It was the result of over-excitement and fatigue and a hot sun. The case is indistinguishable from other cases of dazzling lights and heavenly voices

and strange notions of poor disordered wits.

And, no doubt, if you had been one of the gossips who talked about it next day with the wife of Judas at the door of her house in Straight Street, Damascus, and if she had been telling you about the poor invalid they brought in, blinded and dazed, yesterday, and "he sits there, upstairs, sometimes very silent, and sometimes talking very strangely," you would have learned of nothing in the incident to distinguish it from fifty other cases of over-excitement and fatigue and sunstroke.

Yes: but what evolved out of this amœba? What

came of this vision?

For one thing, it was this vision that sent St. Paul

preaching the gospel of Christ, from Jerusalem and

round about even unto Illyricum.

And, for another, out of this vision there unfolded itself an ever-clearer meaning of those few peremptory words he heard. What was involved in them, evolves itself, first in the letters to Salonika, and then, more clearly, in letters to Galatia and Rome (Romans viii. 26, 27, for example), and, most clearly of all, in the letters to Colossæ and Ephesus. All this was implied in what began on the road to Damascus.

However indistinguishable the beginning from other beginnings, the event declares the difference. St. Paul's "over-excitement" cannot be said to be "just the same" as another man's, until some other man is found whose "fancies" abide and inspire for thirty years, and whose "sunstroke" causes him to write

another Epistle to the Ephesians.

What more living interest can there be in life than to watch these indistinguishable differences becoming distinct? to listen to man declaring, at last, what he did not know before, but knows now, that he has meant from the beginning? And such an interest is to be found in watching the evolution of the Hebrew religion, among the other religions, which looked so like it, and were so unlike: so unlike because there was not in them, and there was in the Hebrew religion, a life which could not rest until Faith had found in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Israel, the God of Jesus of Nazareth.

CHAPTER II .- IN THE OLD TIME BEFORE THEM

. . . when your children ask in time to come, What mean ye by these stones?

It is sometimes wise to ask a person to concede the least that can be asked of him, and I am going to approach the reader in this unassuming way.

I suggest, let us read in the Book of Joshua and

consider what is the least that a cautious reader will make of it. It is evidence of something. Of what is it evidence?

It might be a book which Joshua himself wrote. It might be contemporary evidence of what happened,

Archbishop Usher says, in the year 1451 B.C.

It isn't at all impossible for us to read what was written in 1400 B.C. Men can read in the Tel-el-Amarna Clay Tablets all sorts of news of what was happening in those days at a town called Urusalim. There exist still seven letters sent to Egypt from that "Eternal" City, written very much as a British officer might have written home reports about Salonika, or Siwa, or Baghdad, a few years ago, to Westminster or to Whitehall.

But the Book of Joshua was written, most likely, very much as we read it now, nearer 600 B.C.—that is, 600 years later than the date (1200 B.C.) which is com-

monly given as the date of the Exodus.

Now, if the book is an account written so, 500 or 600 years after the events of which it tells, what is the least a man will believe as he reads, say, the first ten

chapters of it?

I do not think you will be within your rights, if you insist on our accepting this as evidence that Jordan made a miraculous way for the twelve tribes of Israel. Nor that, at the Israelite shout, the walls of Jericho fell flat. But let a man try to imagine what is implied in this story having been written so, in the year 600 B.C. Try to go over the country it goes over, imagining yourself back 2,500 years.

The Valley of Jordan is there, and the plain of Jericho, and there are bare hills and glens of steep limestone, from the Jordan Valley, 1,000 feet below the sea-level, to the heights, the highlands of Ephraim, 2,000 feet above the sea-level. That, it will be conceded, was all there; Shittim, Gilgal, Jericho, Ai,

Gibeon.

And there I find evidence of certain landmarks which I do not doubt our dragoman would have shown us

then, as a dragoman shows landmarks now. Our modern dragoman pointed out to us, I think, the grave of Noah. His doing so did not corroborate the story of the raven and the dove, but the most cautious mind would concede that his doing so was conclusive evidence of the dragoman and his neighbours being familiar with the story of Noah. Joshua iv. 9: "twelve stones . . . and they are there unto this day." Whatever the stones meant, it is probable that they were really there.

I will collect my observations on this imaginary

journey.

There are these twelve stones. I notice that some dragomans point to twelve stones "in Gilgal," and some speak of twelve stones "in the midst of Jordan." And I notice that their traditions differ. One tradition tells of twelve gigantic porters chosen, one for each tribe, carrying the great stones, four or five miles, to where you can see them "unto this day." Others connect the tradition with twelve stones in the riverbed itself. That does not make me the less sure that the tradition was there. It may suggest to me that there were twenty-four stones, and not twelve, to prove twice over the existence of the tradition.

The next story speaks of a hill called Gibeath-ha-araloth. I take it that the hill so named was there. And its tradition, too. It is a tradition connecting the story told in 600 B.C. with "knives of flint." And "knives of flint" suggest that you are in some sort of touch with great antiquity. They hint at a memory of a stone-age before the age of iron: they suggest a time when iron was new-fashioned—just as the Israelite dislike of using iron to shape the stones of altars hints at a memory of days when iron was "not what our fathers used." So we have memories of Samson arming himself with an ass-jawbone; and, again, of Saul and Jonathan alone having swords in all the Israelite army; and, again, of David armed with pebbles from the brook.

Such memories suggest a time, perhaps about

1000 B.C., when iron was rarely known. This "knives of flint" tradition is connected with Gilgal, and Gilgal means (it seems) "Rolling" or "Circular." Perhaps there was a ring of stones there—as we should say, a "Druid" Circle, and tell each other about mistletoe, perhaps, and human sacrifices. I should not be surprised to find that the "Druid" Circle at Gilgal had

twelve stones, more or less.

Next is the story of Jericho, and the curse upon its ancient site, and the sin of Achan, who hid the silver and gold and the goodly mantle in the earth in his tent, and "all Israel stoned him with stones . . . and they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. . . . Wherefore the name of that place was called the valley of Achor, unto this day." Achan had "troubled" Israel, and Achor means "troubling." The name of the valley may have helped the tradition to grow, but you will not doubt the existence of the tradition, or of the "great heap of stones unto this day."

And then (viii. 28), Ai was "made an heap for ever,

even a desolation, unto this day."

And the King of Ai was hanged on a tree, and his carcase was cast at the entering of the gate of the city, and they raised thereon a great heap of stones, unto this day. Such cairns in places of some accursed memory remain unto this (much later) day. And pious passers-by add their stone and curse to the heap.

Then in chapter ix. you have the story of the men of Gibeon who came with "old sacks upon their asses, and wine-skins, old and rent and bound up; and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and was become mouldy." There is no stone monument in this story, but there are the Gibeonites "hewing wood and drawing water . . . unto this day."

And in chapter x. there is, again, another kind of monument; a snatch of an old song: "It came to pass that as [the Five Kings] fled from before Israel, while they were in the going down of Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them, and they died . . . and Joshua said . . .

Sun, be silent upon Gibeon; And thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.

I am not asserting that the great stones were rained from heaven, as Joshua x. states, but I take this as evidence that there were stones in the Beth-horon glen, and also that there were songs among the Reapers of those Highlands.

Will no one tell me what she sings? Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow For old, unhappy, far-off things, And battles long ago.

In 600 B.C. a song of the battle of the Five Kings was still sung, though the battle was already five or

six hundred years away.

And so you might go on, collecting evidences of a tradition: a tradition which was there in Israel telling stories about ancient days: days which had become a dim background of the lives of the men of whom we have contemporary records: men, for example, who lived in 600 B.C.

And tradition has its value. It isn't history. But it is tradition. It has a higher value among simpler civilisations than among us. Mr. Doughty's Arab friend could tell off, on his fingers, twelve or thirteen generations of his ancestors: a tradition of 400 years.

The traditions of Israel, again, can be seen in the earliest writings—for example, the writings of Amos

about 750 B.C.

(ii. 9, 10) "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks. . . . Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite."

(iv. 11) "I have overthrown some of you, as when

God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."

(v. 25) "Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?"

(vi. 5) "[They] devise for themselves instruments of music, like David." (6) "[They] are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore now shall they go captive."

(ix. 7) "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land

of Egypt?'

So Micah (about 720 B.C.) quotes: "Tell it not in Gath" (i. 10), alluding to a lament of 300 years ago. And (vi. 4, 5): "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

"O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him; remember from Shittim unto Gilgal . . ." (that is the very march which our tradition was

remembering).

In Scotland, near the Gareloch, you may see a little mossy precipice down which William Wallace made his horse leap. There is a stone at the foot which marks the place where the horse fell and died, "unto this day." That is a tradition of 600 years ago. There are also songs about William Wallace. A tradition is not history. But neither is it nothing. There probably was a William Wallace. And he probably helped Scotland once upon a time. There is a motto in those

parts, "Dinna forget."

Now, I am thinking that the man who concedes least will hardly concede less than that it is probable that the Israelites came in the name of Jehovah, under Moses, out of the wilderness, and, under Joshua, across the Jordan. It is, at any rate, certain that their national belief was that they had done so. They believed themselves to have come, and, in the name of Jehovah and by the might of His Presence among their armies, to have set to work to exterminate the Amorites. But it is equally clear that they did not exterminate them. And that must be accounted for in tradition. We shall have, accordingly, the story of the Gibeonites, for example; and the story of Rahab.

Many things, like those "knives of flint," will be

much older than those who tell of them guess.

Customs of sacrifice, and of justice between fellow-tribesmen, and of hospitality to strangers, were binding and sacred, no doubt, long before tradition says such laws were given. The date of the Babylonian Code—so like, in some ways, the code of Exodus xxi.-xxiii.—is somewhere about 2345 B.c. And it is already a very much more artificial and civilised and complicated code than the Israelite version of the Semitic customs which tradition said that Moses had received in Sinai, in 1200 B.C.

So tradition gathers into one time, things of immemorial antiquity and things much later than the story it is telling. It is said to Joshua: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written there. . . . " There is a sound of Deuteronomy in the voice talking there. And, in his own day, Joshua was, no doubt, innocent of books and book-learning. It is 500 years out, to set him to meditate over a volume of Deuteronomy. But many of the laws might have been "in the mouth" of the judges or chiefs of Israelite tribes 500 years, or 1,500 years, before they came down to Moses or Joshua.

The writer of that particular chapter (Joshua i.) is so familiar with such a written law as Deuteronomy xii.-xxvi., that it does not suggest itself to his mind to imagine a Joshua who did not sit and meditate upon

volumes.

The people who have studied most carefully these books, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and the rest, feel their way back into the past. They argue from written records what can be argued from written records. And tradition tells them so much as tradition can tell. And there is somewhere to be arrived at a reasonable belief as to what was the condition of religion among the Israelites: how much can be believed to be known about that.

I would ask the man who is most sceptical about what, of this kind, the Bible can tell him, to take up the Bible as being a book in which history runs back into tradition, and to try to set out to discover the story of the Israelite religion as it comes into sight.

He will find himself among a people living now in the Holy Land, observing customs and laws which they themselves trace back to a hero, Joshua, and a greater hero, Moses. They believe that Jehovah, by the hand of these men, set them free from slavery and forced labour in Egypt: that He has led them through the wilderness: that He has brought them to this land to be His people. They have lived in tents: now they live in houses. Their laws have taken a form to suit dwellers in houses among cornfields, vineyards, olivetrees. But their customs look back to their deliverance from Egypt and their wandering in the wilderness. Among feasts of farmers they remember the wilderness, and make themselves tents in open places of the town or on flat roofs of village houses which they have learned to build. They must obey Jehovah's law and bring Him offerings to their sacred places, where stand His altars "of unhewn stones upon which no man has lift up any iron."

Less could not well be conceded than that so much as this is true about Israel. Concede so much. Start

from that. And see what follows.

CHAPTER III,—ELIJAH

But a bold peasantry, their country's pride, When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

COMPARED to ourselves the Hebrews are a people with a long history. And yet I was suggesting in the last chapter that, compared to their neighbours, they were a very modern people.

Two hundred years before the Exodus, the Tel-el-Amarna Tablets were being written. It seems that

the Pharaoh of the Exodus has a date B.C. which balances with the date A.D. of our John Lackland and his Magna Charta: A.D. 1215. In 1215 B.C. the Hebrews were a sort of Bedouins. Four centuries before, the Egyptians had invaded Palestine (about 1600 B.C.), and had found there, not Israelites, but Amorites.

"When Israel came out of Egypt," Egypt was at her Eighteenth Dynasty. And some dynasties lasted two centuries. Perhaps about 2500 B.C., in the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty, Semitic people from Arabia began to arrive in Palestine. And, at about that time, Hammurabi, the Babylonian, claimed to be King of the

West—that is, of the coasts of the Great Sea.

Even then the world of the Nile and Euphrates was old, very old. In 4000 B.C. the Great Pyramid was rising, perhaps. In 4000 B.C. in Erech, Hammurabi's predecessor, Lugal-Zaggisi, was already claiming that he was "King of the West." The nameless dwellers in Palestine were then in their New Stone Age: they had begun their New Stone civilisation, perhaps, 7,000 years earlier. The Israelites were still to be somewhere else for 3,000 years: in Arabia, people say.

The first Bible date, computed from the Hebrew reckonings by Archbishop Usher, is 4004 B.C. And that may be about the date of the building of the Great Pyramid. So that the seven days when Bible-readers were once accustomed to think that the foundations of the earth were measured out and its corner-stone was

laid-

When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy—

those seven days were, in fact, only one week more of work of the slave-gangs of Cheops, near Cairo, or one more week's marching of the soldiers of Lugal-Zaggisi patrolling the lines of communication of a Babylonian Empire which extended from Basra to Beirut.

From Moses to Nebuchadnezzar is, perhaps, 600 years. From King Saul to Nebuchadnezzar, very likely about 450 years. Our Tudors, Stuarts, Hanoverians

and reigning House, alone, cover as great a space. From the first prophecy which Amos wrote or dictated (if Amos did write or dictate) about 745 B.C., to some latest of our Psalms, written, very likely, 600 years later, will give you how long—or will you say, how short—a period? It is as many (or as few) years, as from William Rufus to William of Orange, or from Edward I. to Edward VII.

And again, the story of the Hebrew Inspiration speaks of a little country. From Dan to Beersheba is about a quarter of the distance from John o' Groats to Land's End. From Samaria to Jerusalem is about as far as from Manchester to Chester. York and Lan-

caster are twice as far apart.

I do not know how far these dates and distances will help the imagination, but it is certain that, if anyone is looking for awe-inspiring antiquity, it is not to Israel he must look. When Israel came into the Holy Land they must have seemed a barbarous new people to the Amorites, or Canaanites. They were Bedouins with black tents and camels and desert manners, coming upon people who had houses and mud-walled towns and vineyards and fields of wheat.

The Philistines, who came, they say, from the old (long-buried) Minoan civilisation of Crete, could teach them much—perhaps the use of iron, perhaps the use

of the potter's wheel.

As regards civilisation, Israel must have felt like Bishop Butler's Children among the Grown-up People: with "their distrust in themselves, and natural deference to grown people, whom they find here settled in a world where they themselves are strangers." There was only one possession of knowledge which these Chosen People had for their very own. Tyre and Sidon, Ammon and Moab and Edom had something like it. But what they had, proved, in the event, to be incapable of becoming anything like that which Israel's knowledge grew to be. These new arrivals, these Children, among the wrinkled wise old nations of the Euphrates and the Nile, were the Children of Promise.

"Their angels" did "always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt . . . I taught Ephraim to go; I took them on my arms."

You are to watch in the Old Testament, not a divinely inspired revelation of immemorial history, any more than a divinely inspired revelation of astronomy or geography or geology. You are to follow the evolution of their faith during a quite measurable period. They are the people who are being taught to hear and to answer the voice of God.

About the year 850 B.C. a King of Moab set up a stone in gratitude to the Moabite god Chemosh. King Mesha has had a victory over Ahab, King of Israel. Ahab's father, Omri, had "oppressed Moab many days, because Chemosh was angry . . . forty years . . . and Chemosh said unto me, Take Nebo against Israel; and I went by night, and fought against it from break of dawn till noon, and I took it and put them all to death, seven thousand men [and (?) boys] and women [and (?) girls] and slave-girls, for I had devoted it to Chemosh."

The folk-story said that Moab was the son of Abraham's nephew, Lot. And the Moabite record is. you may say, a cousin, with a family likeness, to some

of the stories you read in the Bible.

Ahab's son Jehoram made an alliance with Jehoshaphat against Moab, and besieged the King of Moab (2 Kings iii. 26): "And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him . . . then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead. and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great wrath against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land."

It was hopeless to think Jehovah would prevail against a Chemosh who had been invoked with so efficacious a sacrifice as a Prince Royal. Israel withdrew.

As you read those words you can feel how real to the Israelites, at one time, had been the god Chemosh of Moab. One has only to remember the story of Jephtha's daughter to feel that there was, once upon a time, more likeness between the religions of the Cousin Races than the Jews, later, could have believed.

Eight chapters, from 1 Kings xvii. onward, tell the story of a prophet of Israel of those days, Elijah of

Gilead beyond Jordan.

It might be doubted whether there was any very great difference between Moab's faith in Chemosh, and Israel's faith in Jehovah. The Mr. Incredulous of whom I was thinking just now, who will concede only so much as he cannot refuse to concede, might say: I can see no difference at all. And yet, it is as you watch the process of the evolution of the Israelite religion that you realise that there is all the difference in life between the religion of Jehovah and the religion of Chemosh. In the event, no difference could well be greater.

How far back you can trace the distinguishing quality of the Israelite religion may be doubtful. Such a distinction cannot arise without the rise of individual heroes and prophets. It would need, at each step, prophetic men to originate a faith like that of Israel. But let us leave uncertain the most ancient names. Let Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, for the present, stand merely for the forgotten seers, through whom Elijah's traditional faith came down to him. Leave Moses, if you wish. Leave Joshua, if you will. Begin at Elijah, just now. The great thing is to get started, not altogether incredulous, at *some* starting-point.

In Elijah's story you can watch the higher faith unfolding itself and proving itself higher than the lower faiths. That is to see the sunrise of the Truth. That

is to be there in the springtime of the Truth.

I suppose what will bring us nearest to a picture of Elijah's world will be to read through Exodus xxi.-

xxiii.

That Law comes to us as a code given in the wilderness to tent-dwellers. But it is clear that this Law has got recast; it has entered into another air and light and scene. People, here, have sheep that stray into

their neighbour's field of young wheat, and asses that fall, if they are overburdened, in the rocky path between village and village; and they have pits or cisterns cut in the rock on their small-holding, holes into which a neighbour's ox may fall.

Men do not legislate about these things a hundred years before they know the names of them, when they are wandering in wildernesses. Here you have to do with farmers and peasants, like the Israelites of Elijah's

day.

In some ways they are people of unchanging customs, and if you want to look in at their village life at harvest-time, their reaping and gleaning and winnowing, the Book of Ruth will help you; though Ruth iv. 7 warns you that, even here, customs do change, and that people alter a "manner of attestation in Israel" from passing a shoe to your neighbour, in "former" times, to some other "act and deed" to-day.

Now, in the days of Elijah the religion and national life of Israel is being shocked into intense consciousness of itself, by a collision between it and another religion and national life. Ahab, the son of Omri, took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.

I have seen it suggested that our Psalm xlv. was made in honour of this wedding. The ivory palace is fragrant with myrrh, aloes, and cassia. The maids of honour are Princesses. The Queen goes glistering and golden. She is brought unto the King in raiment of needlework. And she and her maidens enter the King's palace with joy and gladness. And the Court Poet sings:

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. . . . Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children: whom thou mayest make princes in the land."

We know Jezebel's story, how she patronised the Zidonian Baal-worship in Samaria, and kept at her court innumerable prophets "which did eat at Jezebel's table." The radiant "daughter of Tyre" in her "vesture of gold" represented a Phœnician civilisation beside which Israelite national life tooked homely and old-fashioned. There face one another Jehovah of Israel and Melkart of Tyre, to both of whom their worshippers may have used the same name of "Baal," or Lord. It may be, both had images at their sacred places, and sacred places upon many hill-tops. The name "Baal," at any rate, had not become a name which was, above all things, not Jehovah's, when Gideon's name was Jerubbaal; and in Saul's family, and even in David's, "baal" was used as part of the proper names of Jehovah-fearing Israelites.

How much the invading Israelites had borrowed from Amorite (or Canaanite) worship, and how much they had always had in common with them, is, of course, unknown, but the collision of the religion of Tyre and the religion of Israel caused the opposition of Jehovah's prophets to the worship of all these Baals to

become a life and death struggle.

The beginning and first victory in this struggle is told in the story of Elijah. He represents the kind of faith in Jehovah, and manner of life in Israel, for which I turned to Exodus xxi.-xxiii.

To read those chapters is to be aware of a homely, manly, neighbourly, God-fearing people. Their Law has protection of a kind for slaves, for girls, for the woman with a little child, for the man wounded in a quarrel, for the man who has, by mischance, shed blood, for the man whose ass or ox has fallen into a careless neighbour's unclosed cistern, for the slave whose tooth is broken. Here are men who respect themselves and respect each other. And, over them, Jehovah is seeing justice done between man and man on equal terms.

The duty to the neighbour is hallowed by the thought that it is Jehovah who desires this neighbourliness. Much that is in this code is common to other Semitic peoples. Long before Israelites came into the Holy Land (as we saw), a code something like this Exodus code was drawn up and written down by a Semitic King

of Babylon, Hammurabi.

His date was, we will say, 2345 B.C., for that is an

easy number to remember. People argue that Exodus was influenced by Hammurabi's code. There are likenesses, and there are differences. In Babylon, you feel an autocrat King imposing a code which divides the subjects into castes, and punishes them unequally. In Exodus you have men of a sturdier equality. You are among a simpler and manlier and more religious people.

And it is among these people that Jezebel incited Ahab to be a tyrant. (I Kings xxi. 8-10) "So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent [them] unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his [Naboth's] city. Proclaim a fast... and set two men of Belial before [Naboth], and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the King [Exodus xxii. 28]. And then carry him

out, and stone him, that he die."

It is as protesting in the name of free peasant proprietors against this foreign selfishness of power, no less than as prophesying in the name of Jehovah against this foreign Melkart, that Elijah stands before Ahab saying (xxi. 19): "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thine, even thine." The free people of Jehovah are championed here against the King that values a vineyard more than a brave man's life.

Jezebel must have succeeded well in her promotion of the foreign Baal-worship. (xix. 10) "And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left

and they seek my life, to take it away."

No quarter is given on either side. "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." It was a savage act, and yet no one can read the story and not feel that Elijah is the man who believes in a living God, a God of righteousness. The character of Jehovah is becom-

ing more clearly known. Chemosh or Moloch or Melkart are not like this.

Jehovah is a God of righteousness, as well as the God of Israel. He is a national God as yet, but He is a God who judges His nation as a righteous Judge. Part already of the sacrifice He requires of His people is justice and mercy of Kings to poor men. That was, perhaps, not a new thought in Israel, but an old thought becomes a new one when it has been challenged and vindicated: when it has been in danger and has come through, the stronger.

There was here a parting of the ways. And Elijah led the prophets along the right way. Mount Carmel is a watershed where vital religion and immoral super-

stition run different ways.

CHAPTER IV.—AMOS

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright In the forests of the night, What immortal hand or eye Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

WE come to Amos.

And to pass from Elijah to Amos is to move on, out of tradition into history. Tradition dictated the story of Elijah as we read it. The story of what happened 850 B.C. was written, in the Book of Kings, about 600 B.C. Tradition dictated the story of Elijah: but Amos may have dictated his book himself.

The severest critics leave six out of seven of the verses as Amos' own. They have removed the mountains (iv. 13) and even Pleiades and Orion (v. 8). But once they have done this, they leave most of the Book

of Amos as they found it.

So that your conceder of the least concessions that can be wrung from him, must now begin to feel con-

vinced that he is going upon firm history.

Not that Amos, any more than Jeremiah (xiv. 1-9) or Haggai (i. 10, 11) or Malachi (iii. 7-12), believes less

than Elijah had believed in a connection between the sins of men and the disfavour of the weather such as corresponds ill with the Saying of our Lord about God's sunlight and showers, and unthankful and evil men.

Amos prays, and averts a curse of locusts in the time of the King's mowings. And again he prays, and a prairie fire in the plain of Jordan is turned back from

the Ephraim hills (vii. 1, 4).

Amos is, in some ways, widely separated from us, so long ago, so far away. But the story of Amos is so told that it is intensely exciting to middle-aged people. The story of Elijah is for the schoolboy enthusiasms, whatever the ages (or the age) of the readers.

And yet, let the Most Cautious Reader be pleased to observe this. Amos comes into our ken as an unobtrusive companion of Elijah. Elijah and Amos have come down to us together, and it is very uncertain whether Amos would ever have reached us alone.

Rejoice, O young men, of all ages: rejoice, O ancient Hebrews, and mediæval knights and monks, and all surviving lovers of Mendelssohn, and all who love a thrilling story: rejoice in your Elijah! He is a sudden apparition scaring the wicked King. He calls fire from heaven. He runs swifter than all the King's horses and all the King's men. He listens with mantled face at the entering in of the cave and hears the still small voice.

See his place in the human imagination. Think of what he became to the Hebrew people. Remember how, when the cry was cried from the Cross, they took for granted, "He calleth for Elias." The least I must believe of this man is that he was a most overwhelming man, utterly fearless to defend the true religion against a religion which had no conscience.

Perhaps, nowadays, I should revere him still more, if I saw him defy Queen Jezebel, although he was armed with no fire from heaven, and called to help him no legions of angels—drought-angels or rain-angels—if he dared King Ahab, alarmed only with the truth.

But, if it is of his story you are thinking, you must

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consider that there was no thought of pleasing you when men chose to tell it this way. And that if it had not been told this way, it is very likely that you would never have heard of Amos.

And then you are to consider that the distinction of Israel over against Moab, and of the worship of Jehovah over against the worship of Chemosh, is that the one has given us Elijah and Amos. And the other, for all the likeness there may once have been between the two religions, has not.

There were five Kings in the hundred years between Elijah's King, Ahab, and Amos' King, Jeroboam II.

Elijah's successor, Elishah, and his guild of prophets, blessed the work of destroying all the house of Ahab and Jezebel. The Tyrian Baal-worship is not felt to be the great danger in Amos' days. Amos does not name Baal: and the Baal-worship which Hosea denounces is not Tyrian, but Amorite and Israelite. Elijah and Elishah and Jehu achieved something. But what they began needed Amos and Hosea to go on with it. And you find Hosea denouncing, in turn, the very work of which his own is a continuation: "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease" (Hosea i. 4).

If we were comparing religions, there is a likeness between this legacy of bloodguiltiness in Ephraim and the avenging Furies of the Greek tragedies. A doom is gathering over Northern Israel. If anyone were

fatalist, he would call it an inevitable doom.

The truth is that, in spite of Elijah and Elishah, Israel was becoming involved in a great world in which the old plain Israel failed to remain true to its national calling. "Ephraim mixeth himself with the peoples"... "a trafficker," "a Canaanite" (Hosea vii. 8, xii. 7).

As the Bedouins had become dwellers in country villages, so, now, the simple country-folk were becoming a people who were in touch with the great trade of the world, as well as with its great empires

and their religions. That marriage of Ahab and Jezebel, allying Samaria and Tyre, was significant. It would be, most likely, an alliance against Damascus. Samaria had become diplomatist. And beyond Damascus, in turn, lay Nineveh, threatening Damascus and Tyre and Samaria and all.

A diplomatist might have foreseen the time when (after Damascus) Samaria would be blotted out by

Nineveh. It was only twenty-five years away.

But it is not as a diplomatist that Amos speaks. Amos, talking as a prophet, sees Samaria doomed, not because Nineveh is Nineveh, but because Samaria is Samaria.

Meanwhile, protected from Damascus by the league with the Zidonians, and by some kind of vassalage to the Assyrians, Israel took her place among the diplomatic powers of those days. Her Kings became imitators of foreign fashions, as, in the eighteenth century, small German Princes imitated the Court of France.

Ahab had his ivory palace. And the daughter of Tyre was there, whose clothing was of wrought gold, and whose views were in the great Zidonian style. Together they extended the royal domain, until it included, for example, the vineyard which had been the inheritance of Naboth's fathers. It is the beginning of that of which Zephaniah later speaks: "I will punish the princes and the king's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel." So English Shakespeare dis-likes Spanish fashions. Let no man give away "the inheritance of his fathers." Let Israel be Israelite: a small nation, but true to itself.

This new foreign fashion is the ruin of Israel. Amos describes it: the covetousness for the poor man's field

-for example:

(ii. 6, 7) "They have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes: [they] pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek. . . ."

(vi. 4-6) "[They] lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch

themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out

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of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall: [they] sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; [they] devise for themselves instruments of music, like David; and drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the

affliction of Joseph."

(viii. 4-6) "Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat." That is the wheat trade, for example, with Tyre, making men merchants instead of neighbours. You can see plainly what is happening. The new trading and the new luxury grow together. The peasant does not matter: the corn trade does. The rich become bad citizens. And the poor are losing self-respect, self-reliance. Commerce is a terrible invader of simple races. have only to think of the way "usury" is spoken of in the Old Testament to see how difficult it was for the old-fashioned farming Israel to imagine an honest system of Capital and Interest.

And, to Amos, the religion which cannot save a people from the corrupting temptations of so critical a time is thereby proved to be false. Whether it calls upon Jehovah or not, so failing, it is proved false. The religion of Jehovah should have had another kind of manhood ready to defend Samaria than the Israelites whom Sargon found there in 722: the rich so ignoble and the poor so dispirited. It only makes the offence of Israel the more offensive that Israel believes herself to be religious and desires the Day of Jehovah.

Amos speaks in scorn. He even jeers:

(iv. 4, 5) "Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three years . . . for this liketh you."

He speaks for Jehovah:

(v. 21-25) "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgement roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" Stop and look at this religion of Amos. You will

Stop and look at this religion of Amos. You will notice that he thinks Israel was, once upon a time, acceptable to Jehovah: long ago, in the wilderness; and that this acceptance of Israel by Jehovah had very little to do with any sacrifices or burnt offerings.

That is not at all like the Book of Leviticus. It is

That is not at all like the Book of Leviticus. It is clear that Amos had not read our Five Books of Moses. It is imaginable that he would have had no patience to read them had they been written in time for him to try.

Such religious observance as he knows, he hates, he despises; new moons, Sabbaths, songs and sacrifices at Beth-el and Gilgal and Dan and Beersheba. And this, not because it ought to be at Jerusalem instead of at Beth-el and Gilgal and Dan and Beersheba; not because it is at the wrong shrine, but because it is false wherever it is.

This herdman of the wilderness of Tekoa comes as a stranger from dwellings with mud-walls, or perhaps black tent-curtains, to where they are building new fashionable dwellings of hewn stone: "And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel. . . ."

Straight, you stand. Crooked, you fall. There are

Straight, you stand. Crooked, you fall. There are no songs or sacrifices that can avail against the invisible law which the mason's plumbline indicates. His country eyes are fresh to see the wonder of the plumbline. And his country life has made him cleareyed to see the moral peril of Israel. Of character,

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as of walls, it is true. Straight, you stand. Crooked,

you fall.

His view of religion is that Israel has to do with the living God. Jehovah has known Israel as He has known no other people. Jehovah is the righteous God of all the nations, but, most of all, of Israel. For three transgressions, yea, for four (i. 3, 6, 9, 11, 13). Jehovah will punish Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab. (You are to leave out ii. 4, 5.) Yet the six threats against the other nations are only a prelude to the threat against Israel. (iii. 2) "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."

That is the kind of message that Amos delivered at

Beth-el:

(vii. 10-13) "Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away . . . prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house."

His Majesty will be gravely displeased! "It is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house." Such prophesying is not permitted here. "It isn't done."

And Amos went away. He had delivered his

message.

It is one of the notable differences between Amos and Hosea, that Amos, being a man of Judah, did go away. This footman-like dismissal from the front-door silenced his message to Israel. Amaziah was left

"in peace."

Yet men do not abrogate the laws of gravitation by throwing down the plumbline in disgust. And Amos' message did come to be verified, and was, somehow, in Judah, committed to memory, and to writing. His is the earliest written prophecy.

When it came to reading him in synagogues his message was felt to be too inexorable. And so verses of promise and hope were added. But his own message (appropriately dated "two years before the earthquake") ends with ix. 7, 8: "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor [or Crete], and the Syrians from Kir [in Mesopotamia]? Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth." He stops there, it seems.

And this indeed did happen. Israel disappeared. Modern scholarship may weaken our faith in the Exodus thunders and lightnings of Jehovah on Mount Sinai, but for modern readers there emerges only the more terrible, that thunderstorm whose name is Amos.

You cannot see, as the "poor Indian" sees, God in the storm of wind or rain or lightning. But, reading Amos, he who concedes least will scarcely refuse to concede that "the Lord God hath spoken." To find again anything at all like this prophecy you must listen, in the New Testament, to a voice whose words St. Luke repeats: "Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

CHAPTER V.—HOSEA

My own sweet heart, come home again! You've gone astray Out of your way; Come home again, come home again!

Amos is a very solitary figure. He comes as a stranger, out of Judah into Israel, and delivers his menacing message and is gone.

You hear his prophecy like a lion's roar:

"Shall evil befall the city, and the Lord hath not done it?

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

The lion hath roared, who will not fear?

The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

He is like him who said: "I am the voice"—and that a very stern voice: the nearest you hear to any human tenderness is when he denounces the cruelty of inhuman foreigners, or the indifference of the rich Israelites to the poverty of the poor.

There is no word of his home. And when we see

him, he is away from his own country.

But, when you turn to Hosea, you realise that this very strangeness and unhomeliness of Amos lightens for him the chief burden of a man, in the name of God, denouncing woe to men.

For Hosea is denouncing woe to his own people. There is nothing impersonal in Hosea's message. As you read that, you seem to see a face wan with the

grief of saying what he must say.

For him the story of his own house and the story of his people accompany one another. Both of them are miserable stories of unfaithfulness. And sometimes you cannot distinguish whether it is for his faithless wife or for his faithless country that his heart aches.

It is not intellectually only that Hosea sees what is happening in Israel. It is not even only moral indignation that he feels. His whole life is involved. It would be nearer the truth to say he is a prophecy him-

self than that he prophesies.

You will find the same kind of double grief, private and public in one, in Ezekiel xxiv. Ezekiel knows that his wife is dying: and that Jerusalem is doomed. The message to him is: "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." And also: "Behold, I will profane my sanctuary." The two griefs meet and flow on in one, together.

Jeremiah was forbidden to marry. Ezekiel "spake

unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died." But Hosea's is a drearier loneliness. He is to learn what unfaithfulness means through his love for "Gomer the daughter of Diblaim." Through his experience of his own love so faithlessly requited, and through his experience of his own love still true to her who has been false, there comes to Hosea a revelation of what the love of God is towards ungrateful men. He learns to see what is the love of God and what is the shame of Israel.

The language which Hosea learned to speak, through this experience, is heard again in Isaiah, Jeremiah,

Ezekiel.

The critics have doubted the authenticity of fewer verses in Hosea than in Amos. They leave nine in ten as his. Yet they alter the balance of the prophecy. For they make his message end with xiii. 16: "Samaria shall bear her guilt; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women . . ." I will not copy out the words. It is possible that Hosea lived long enough to see these things happen, and to die in an Assyrian massacre in Samaria. So then his message is the same stern message as that of Amos. But he added a great deal to the meaning of Amos. He has made the wrath of which he speaks so much the more awful because it is the wrath of Love.

Hosea speaks of love met by ingratitude, where Amos spoke of holiness offended by unrighteousness. In the first three chapters Love speaks, as the love of a husband. In chapter xi., as the love of a father. Hosea has seen more of the meaning of God than Amos. He has said things which lead religion a day's

journey on in the direction of Christianity.

I spoke of the feeling of "seeing Hosea's sorrowful face." It is like looking at the grief of someone who is himself bearing the shame of the guiltiness which he condemns. There is a look in this face which is not without a likeness to the look of Jesus as you see Him in the last scenes of the Gospel.

If anyone tries to reconstruct the setting of this prophecy, it is not very different from what Amos has already suggested some twenty years earlier. There is the same wealth of the rich and the same bad citizenship. Only, Jeroboam II. dies, and Israel goes from bad to worse.

(vi. 6) "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." The thing desired as mercy is that "piety" which became in Chaucer's English "pity"—the opposite of the selfishness of riches.

The impatience of Amos with all the sacrifices and burnt offerings of Beth-el and Gilgal is still there. Mercy and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God more

than burnt offerings.

When Hosea formulates his accusations in detail, it is with the priests that he begins (iv.). He speaks of the worship of Baalim, and seems to be alluding to a worship addressed to Jehovah. This false worship of Jehovah is so distinct (for him) from the true worship, that it is indistinguishable from heathen worship. The immorality of the High Places, "under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is

good," is spoken of as idolatry.

Both Amos and Hosea use words which, taken literally, mean that all sacrifice had better go. And yet Hosea, at any rate, is heard pleading with Israel to offer true worship to a Jehovah who is quite distinct from the Baals. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor [Achan's valley of Troubling] for a door of hope: and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me, My husband; and shalt call me no more My Lord [Baal]" (ii. 14, to the end of the chapter).

Hosea does not say anything in detail as to the offerings which Jezreel shall, in that day, offer, when her

bread and water and wool and flax and oil are plentiful again. But the thing condemned as Baal-worship, whether it uses Jehovah's name or another, is clear from such a passage as iv. 13, 14: "How do you expect your daughters to be pure women, when your worship is this unclean idolatry?" He is condemning a religious immorality. He does not condemn all the religious forms of his time.

He speaks of it as a real loss to a people to be separated from their pillars and ephods and teraphim (iii. 4), and to be "without sacrifice" is as bad as to

be "without a prince."

To him, the way of worship which his fellow-countrymen follow is a desertion of Jehovah. He is trying to reclaim his people, who are, clearly, quite unconscious of any disloyalty to Jehovah. He pleads for a purer religion. He helps to make a clear distinction, not between a worship which has dispensed with morality and a morality which can dispense with worship, but between false and true religion.

Perhaps for him the emblems of this immoral worship were "the idols," "the calves."

they speak! Men kiss calves!" (xiii. 2).
And the name "Baal" must go. "Thou shalt no more call me Baal." That implies that Israel had called Jehovah "Baal," thinking no harm. Now there shall be a separation. "Baal" shall mean a religion without purity or pity: on the Amorite or Phænician level. "Jehovah" means righteousness and mercy.

If you are to follow the evolution of man's "reaction" to the "stimulus" of God, this growing distinction of the faith of the prophets is to be marked. It is an advance towards the purity of the true prophecy and the true sacrifice as opposed to the false prophecies and priesthoods alike. Amos opposed both (vii. 10 and 14). So did Hosea (iv. 5, 6). So did Jeremiah (v. 30, 31).

But, when all is said, it is ungracious work to analyse the influence of Hosea. Let us say that what he did was this: he saw deep into the depths of the love of God.

And seeing that, he is tossed to and fro, like Jeremiah, between the thought of the unpardonableness of Israel's ingratitude, and the thought of God's all-

pardoning love.

His prophecy comes to that dreadful close. It speaks, not of peace, but of punishment. But Hosea has advanced to a height from which the reconciliation will some day be seen, for he has seen that the sinfulness of sin lies in this—that it is ingratitude to love: to such love as is in God.

His revelation seems to close in a failure of God. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" (he has said). "How shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man!" Nevertheless, the last word is this: "Samaria shall bear her guilt . . . her infants . . . and their women."

Yet, as Saul and Jonathan handed on the work to David, of freeing Israel from the Philistines, so, after this spiritual Gilboa, Hosea hands on his work to Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He began to tell a parable of the Prodigal Son, and died leaving it unfinished. In Hosea's story, the son is still in the far country. But Hosea's experience of what pitiful love could be in his own heart, becomes a reflection in which is seen the Love that is in the heart of God. And we cannot see that, and believe in its failure.

The love that bought back that poor Gomer when she has forsaken him and sold herself into shame and slavery, the love of Hosea which is still love, still pleading, reveals what God's pity and patience must be. It is the quality of true love to be enduring. It

must survive.

(ii. 14, 15) "Therefore, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth."

(ii. 18-23) "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls

of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith the Lord, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel . . . and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

It has not been doubted that these are Hosea's own

words, which Gomer taught him to say.

Or, again, it is the fatherly love of Hosea for his own little boys that is for him a pale reflection of the Love of Jehovah for Israel. (xi.) "When Israel was a child, then I loved him. . . . Yet I taught Ephraim to go; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. . . .

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?
How shall I deliver thee, Israel?
How shall I make thee as Admah?
How shall I set thee as Zeboim?
Mine heart is turned within me,
My compassions are kindled together.
I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger,
I will not return to destroy Ephraim:
For I am God, and not man."

Whatever followed, Hosea had said these words. We do not know how these words came to be written down. Who was it that had the hope which made it seem worth while to save them out of the wreck of Beth-el and Jezreel and Samaria? But the words survive—

Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof That they were born for immortality. When some other of the Semitic religions round about Israel is found to have inspired thoughts like these, it will be time to begin to consider whether the *likenesses* of the Semitic religions would justify our dethroning the Israelite religion from its sovereign

place among the faiths of men.

The amazing truth is that out of Semitic religion, with its crude thoughts of God, and its proneness to slip downward into sensual idolatry, this one Semitic religion was proved capable of rising to so high a height. It saved itself first from the contamination of Gebal and Tyre and Sidon: then from any likeness to its nearer neighbours. The more Israel resembled the others, the more astonishing and the more beautiful and the more divine is this which it is doing here.

We watch this event in the progress of the faith of man. Whatever might have been expected to happen, this has happened. It has happened nowhere else.

But it has happened here.

Think of the supposed marriages of Semitic gods and goddesses: some of the writers suspect that such a marriage was not unknown even to Israelite belief: to us it seems unimaginable, but they suspect that they have found, in Egyptian records, for example, of Israelites at Assuan—records of an Israelite garrison there, long before Hosea's time—traces of a goddess, Anath, as well as of a god, Jehovah.

If it were not merely suspected, but demonstrated, that Israel ever had any such belief as this, the fact would remain that, whereas other Semitic races continued to believe (and to represent in their temples) a Queen of Heaven married to the Lord God, in Israel Jehovah is known as Spirit and spiritual, a Divine Love which can be answered by an adoring Israel.

Whatever lay behind this vision of the true relation of God to the hearts of men, when you are come to Hosea, it lies behind. It has made way for this.

Heartily know, When half-gods go, The gods arrive.

CHAPTER VI.--ISAIAH

Who would true valour see, Let him come hither; One here will constant be, Come wind, come weather.

THE Book of Isaiah is a collection of many prophecies of different dates. It takes its name from the first forty

chapters.

A reader would be wise to read these as a separate book, and among these he will have to pass over xiii. and most of xiv., and xxiv.-xxvii., and xxxiv., xxxv. Chapters xxxvi.-xxxix. are historical and illustrate the prophecies.

That is to say, you will read twenty-seven chapters, instead of the sixty-six chapters we were accustomed

to think of as Isaiah's.

There must be readers who will receive these suggestions with a certain degree of irritation and even resentment, and yet submission to the critics is rewarded, for such a reading presents you with a clearer view of a very great man. And, if you discover that, after the very great man of these twenty-seven chapters, other great prophets emerge, one in xl.-lv., and another in lvi.-lxvi., you will scarcely claim that you still have any reasonable ground for nursing a grievance against the critics.

And this original Isaiah is a very great man. His prophecies have to do with about forty years of Jewish history. The first chapter takes you straight to the most critical time of his work. Let us look at Isaiah.

chapter i.

It carries on the story which Amos and Hosea tell. As we saw Ephraim invaded by foreign influences, Jezebel and her Baal-worship, so that a change was taking place from a simpler and more manly, to a more selfish civilisation, so, with Jezebel's daughter, Queen Athaliah, and others, the same contagion of foreign manners has infected Judah.

As, in Amos, Jehovah had said: "I hate, I despise your feasts... yea, though ye offer... I will not accept..." so in Isaiah, Jehovah says: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them... ye spread forth your hands... your hands are full of blood. Wash you... seek judgement, relieve the oppressed."

It is like Amos speaking. And, at verse 21, he is speaking like Hosea of what this "faithful city" has

become.

Amos had no sterner righteousness of indignation. And Hosea did not love Ephraim more dearly than Isaiah loved the Holy City. But, in Isaiah i., the calamity is felt to be nearer. It is a question of days,

now. It is there already: at the very gates.

"Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and festering sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil. Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion' is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers . . ." and then, as if the fact baffled all speech in metaphors, he adds: "as a besieged city."

We have the Assyrian account of the same events

as they appeared to the Nineveh invaders.

"In my third campaign" (701 B.C.), says Sennacherib, "I went against the Hittites and to Zidon, [then a list of Zidonian towns] . . . the terror of the arms of Asshur, my lord, had overwhelmed them . . . they submitted themselves to me."

Arvad, Gebal, Ashdod, Ammon, Edom, "rich

presents and heavy tribute brought before me, and kissed my feet." Ekron was in league with Hezekiah of Judah: "They drew up before me in battle array." In reliance "upon Asshur, my lord, I fought with them and accomplished their defeat." "The nobles of Ekron . . . I slew: on stakes round about the city I impaled their corpses.

"And Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong cities, fortresses and smaller towns . . . without number, with . . . battering-rams and . . . siege engines with infantry and mines . . . I besieged, I took: 200,150 people . . . and horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep with-

out number . . . I counted as spoil.

"Himself, as a bird in a cage, in Jerusalem, his

royal city, I shut up. . . . ''

So "in reliance upon Asshur, my lord," Sennacherib

prospers.

Turning from the Nineveh account to Isaiah, you notice how little "my lord Asshur" has to do with it, in Isaiah's view. Even when Jerusalem is, to all appearance, doomed, and Asshur looms so huge, and Jehovah has a hopeless task, Isaiah (as Amos was) is thinking only of Jehovah. "Wash you, make you clean . . . I will restore thy judges as at the first . . . thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city."

It has been suggested that the successful invasions by those huge Empires, advancing in the name of their gods, and overpowering the gods of Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and Telassar and Hamath and Arpad and Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivvah, when they reached Asia Minor, made a great mark upon religion.

It was the work of the several gods and goddesses to mount guard over their own peoples. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

And so many divine sentinels were found asleep at their posts. What, then, shall men believe in? Not in those impotent gods. And, as certainly, not in Asshur and Ishtar and the rest. "A god" who delights in the desolation of forty-six cities and numberless villages, and takes pleasure in seeing the nobles of Ekron impaled on stakes round about their city, is not adored. He is only detested. There is, at bottom, something contemptible in "frightfulness," however successful.

And so men turned, it is conjectured, to unpolitical divinities who had never been accepted by civilised society: shadowy, under-worldly; perhaps a little as Saul turned to the Witch of Endor's familiar spirits. These were not concerned with State affairs, but were worshipped in secret places, in darkling rites, and appealed to man's sense of mystery in mortal life, man's sense of individual sin and man's desire for individual survival after death.

Such cults passed over from Asia to Greece. And a city, like Athens, which had defied the Persian armies, could not keep out the "unknown gods" who came to them from the East. The "Mysteries" were the result of those huge imperial disturbances. Their shock was felt in Asia Minor, Athens, Sicily, Italy.

It is interesting to contrast the story of Jerusalem.

They needed there no "unknown God."

At first their little town defied Asshur. The prophets defied Asshur in Jehovah's name, not as defying a rival national god in the name of their own national God. Jehovah is defending, at the critical moment, not His own people from Asshur's people, so much as an humbled penitent people from a bad man.

Isaiah's words are: "Woe to thee that spoilest and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously and

they dealt not treacherously with thee!"

He is speaking in the name not of a national so much as a righteous God. The God whom Amos knew speaks impartially to Edom and Ammon and Moab and Israel. And so Ezekiel, later, could, with unshaken faith in Jehovah, foresee the advance of Babylon and the fall of Zedekiah. This time it is Zedekiah who has dealt treacherously and Nebuchadnezzar has not dealt treacherously with him. "Shall he [Zedekiah] prosper?

Shall he escape that doeth such things? Shall he break his covenant, and yet escape? As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where Nebuchadnezzar] dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he brake, even with him,

in the midst of Babylon he shall die."

To Isaiah, the Assyrian is "the rod of mine anger." To Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar is "my servant." To Isaiah (xlv.), Cyrus is the Lord's anointed. There is no need of inventing new, or rediscovering old forgotten religions, for such believers as the prophets. Their own religion is unshaken whether Hezekiah defies Sennacherib, or Zedekiah is led away blinded with the captives of Nebuchadnezzar.

"As I live, saith the Lord God." As you read on in Isaiah you find him as much prepared for a destruction of Jerusalem as Amos and Hosea had been for the fall

of Samaria.

The Lord who lives: His righteousness: His claim: are what is most real to Isaiah. His fellow-countrymen were busy, sometimes with diplomacy, sometimes with feverish false worship of Jehovah. But Isaiah, being prophetic, was concerned with the truth about the character of his fellow-countrymen, what they are before the living God. The national character is determining the national fate. Chapter v., with its words like Hosea's, sets it down plainly: "He looked for judgement but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. Woe unto them that join house to house, that lav field to field. . . . "

"Woe unto them that rise up early . . . to drink wine . . . " (v. 1-25), and read on to the end of the chapter, and take up the same indictment at ix. 8-x. 4: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand

is stretched out still."

There is no fitness to survive in such a people. Indeed, they have already, half of them, ceased to exist. For the Northern Kingdom has gone. doom of Northern Israel is surely as much in Isaiah's mind (in chapter v.) as the danger of Jerusalem. And in xxviii. he seems to repeat an old prophecy against Ephraim as a warning to Jerusalem, although it is growing clearer that Jerusalem is for a while to escape a like doom.

And we can see now, that the one strength of Jerusalem was that Isaiah was there. And Isaiah was invincible. Nor is there any doubt wherein lay Isaiah's force. It lay in his steady vision of Jehovah.

Chapter vi. tells how the vision came: the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. That was in 740 B.C. And in 701 B.C. Isaiah alone knows that

Jerusalem is to be saved.

(xxxvii.) "This is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning [Sennacherib]: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? or against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel. . . . I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest. . . ."

So it happened. And Jerusalem survived Nineveh. Nahum and Habakkuk, a hundred years after Isaiah,

tell of the fall of Nineveh.

I wish it were easier to see clearly what kind of religion Isaiah knew in his day as the Jewish religion. He speaks of a land full of idols, but his quarrel with Jerusalem is not that Jerusalem is inattentive to the worship of Jehovah. He is like Amos in this. He complains of them as not knowing the God whom they think they worship. Perhaps the idols of silver and the idols of gold are part of their degrading of the true faith. Perhaps the idols represented Jehovah. Isaiah nowhere mentions Baal-worship.

He has a faith before which idolatry and every religiousness which left the conscience untouched must disappear. "At the brightness of his presence... the springs of the waters were seen, and the founda-

tions of the world were discovered."

If men would feel Jehovah's presence and His power

among the nations and His power in His own chosen nation, there would be no room for the insincere wor-

ship which is really a solemn nothing.

There is a suggestion in xxxiii. 14 of Jerusalem awaking to the dreadfulness of the truth, when they see their Temple standing safe because it is the Holy Place of God. They have escaped Sennacherib, but,

"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

(vi. 3) "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the

whole earth is full of his glory."

The result of knowing His presence is: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And that mood is quick to become that other mood which made Isaiah invincible: "Here am I: send me."

This vision that Isaiah has seen in the Temple at Jerusalem has convinced him that Jerusalem is the

throne of God.

(xiv. 29-32, to the Philistines) "What then shall one answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his

people take refuge."

Nothing else is so real to him as the Presence of Jehovah in Zion: "Ariel," the city where David encamped (xxix. 1, 2, 7), "the hearth of God," most likely. Her enemies shall be as a dream when one awakes. The waking truth is this Presence of Jehovah. And this in spite of the incorrigible folly of her people. Chapters vii.-xi. seem to be speaking of earlier menaces against the Holy City; and i., xiv. 24, xix., xxii., xxiii., xxviii.-xxx., xxxiii., of the Sennacherib invasion.

During the hundred years which followed it looks as though Jerusalem had remembered best what it suited them best to remember, and had forgotten that an unholy Jerusalem was not impregnable. It would not suit them to notice more than that the city was untaken. ISAIAH

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And so it fell to Jeremiah to say: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these."

The survival of the Isaiah-tradition becomes the matter of supreme importance. Let us attend to that. Such a passage as viii. 16, speaking of "disciples," suggests that there was a tradition of Isaiah among men who understood. Manasseh's long reign (it is given as fifty-five years) must have been a time when the Isaiah-tradition was out of favour at Court. And Amon, after him, is said to have "done that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." When the reformers are in favour again, under Josiah, it is seen that the Isaiah-tradition has had an influence, perhaps not exactly such as Isaiah would have desired.

If you think of the hundred years from 720 to 620 B.c. as a time during which the purer religion was evolving, you find, at the end of it, two signs of what has happened: Jeremiah and the Book of Deuteronomy.

When you ask what was the book of the Law discovered (2 Kings xxii.) by Hilkiah, you are told it was Deuteronomy xii.-xxvi. When you turn to that, you find that its aim is to reorganise religion with Jerusalem for the centre. It is a very practical scheme to supersede the High Places: not merely commanding that men shall worship and sacrifice at Jerusalem, but trying to mitigate the inconveniences of such a change to villagers who had been accustomed to sacrifice and feast in their villages, and to Levites whose "living" had been made by ministering at village shrines. Jeremiah and Ezekiel seem to have been carried along by the movement of which Deuteronomy is evidence: a movement which was institutional rather than prophetic. For example, Amos and Isaiah do not seem to be greatly concerned about the Sabbath, Jeremiah and Ezekiel accept Sabbath observance as vital.

Jeremiah, although he clearly is of opinion that no code imposed upon men's lives from without can save Israel, enjoins obedience to Deuteronomy (Jer. xi.).

Isaiah had inspired high ideals. Deuteronomy, not without loss, attempts to reduce these ideals to a prac-

tical system.

Deuteronomy xii. 2 says: "Ye shall surely destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: and ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces . . . and burn . . . and hew down . . . and destroy. . . "

The Lord gave to these organisers their desire, and still there was leanness in their soul. It might have been concerning this change that the poet wrote:

I remember, I remember,
The fir-trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.

Great questions present themselves at this point. And yet there are two things to be remembered even in

so brief a review as this must be.

The worship in those pleasant places, high hill-tops, green tree-shades, was, on the whole, on a level which incurred the unqualified condemnation of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah. Semitic Nature-worship can be a very degraded religion. Even Christian love of Nature, May-daying and the like, has had its dangers, which sentiment tries, in vain, to overlook. There were coarsenesses in those old high-hill and green-tree worships of which the casting or the carving of calf-idols was by no means the lowest.

And then, as to the town overpowering the country—the doleful process with which we are familiar—it is to be remembered that this religion is setting out, about 600 B.C., upon an adventure from which it is amazing that it should ever have returned alive.

There are battles which require men, and men in man's armour, although the shepherd-boy refusing

the man's sword and coat of mail is the more attractive figure. The Jewish religion had to be centralised, organised, unified, disciplined, if it was to survive the Captivity and all that followed.

It is, perhaps, impossible to measure the gains

against the losses.

Read Isaiah i.-xxxix. and Deuteronomy xii.-xxvi., and you meet the same problem as confronts you when you turn from Isaiah xl.-lv. to Ezra and Nehemiah.

Perhaps it is permissible to say: "We have this heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel." The revelation of the prophets survives because so much of it as could survive so, did survive in the institutions of Josiah's reformation, and, again, of Ezra's reformation. And, even if an unfettered fancy could imagine a polity of religious Jews nearer to the Spirit of the most spiritual passages of the "Isaiahs," and of Jonah and of Job and of the Psalms, it remains a fact that in this, and not in any other earthen vessel, the heavenly treasure was carried safely through twenty generations.

Also, in defence of Deuteronomy, it is to be remarked that when Jesus of Nazareth was tempted, His

mind was full, it seems, of Deuteronomy.

"Man shall not live by bread alone.

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God."

It is Deuteronomy each time.

If Jesus was of the House of David, it may be said also that He was of the School of Deuteronomy.

CHAPTER VII.—JEREMIAH

Hope, the paramount *duty* that Heaven lays, For its own honour, on man's suffering heart.

JEREMIAH lived to see the fall of Jerusalem (587), as Hosea had, very likely, seen the fall of Samaria (721 B.C.).

There is a likeness between their characters, as well as between their lots.

You cannot read in Jeremiah without a sense of aching. We know Jeremiah more intimately. We have fifty-two chapters of his to read, not fourteen. But we are only hearing more of the same suffering: the suffering of a man who stands almost alone between the sin of his people and the love of God.

His question is much the same as Hosea's: How can the Divine Love be defeated by the ingratitude of

men?

His chapters have come to us in a disorder as confusing as the disorder of Isaiah's chapters. It is well to get as clear as may be the story of Jeremiah under Josiah, Shallum, Jehoiakim, Coniah, Zedekiah. It will be found 2 Kings xxii.-xxv. 7 and in Jeremiah xxii.

In 604, in Jehoiakim's fourth year, Jeremiah was told to write down what he had prophesied from the reign of Josiah till then. The prophecies were dictated to Baruch, and in the following year were read, on a crowded fast-day in the Temple court, by Baruch. The book got as far as Jehoiakim himself, who could not bear it very long, and cut the roll with a penknife and burned it in a brazier.

Then Jeremiah dictated, and Baruch wrote again, adding "many like words." And much of this second roll, no doubt, has reached us as Jeremiah i.-xvii. So that in i.-xvii. will be found (with additions) the prophecies of Jeremiah's first twenty-three years.

This is still only 604 B.C., and two sieges of Jerusalem

(597, 588-6) are to follow.

Jeremiah, of course, continues to give his message. In xx. he was put in the stocks, and you feel the depth of his misery: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed; I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. . . "

Yet he *must* go on: "And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in mine heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain."

He breaks out with words which were taken as the theme of the Book of Job: "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be named" (Jer. xx. 14 and Job iii. 3). You are made to feel what Jeremiah had endured already, even before the second siege began.

But some day after those two dreadful years of the last siege had begun, you get to the passage which marks the advance beyond Hosea which Jeremiah achieved.

It is in chapter xxxii. when Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the guard. Jeremiah has no doubt at all about the end of the siege. The woebegone King Zedekiah asks in vain for any hope-

And then comes to this man who is a prisoner among his own fellow-citizens, in a city of which he clearly sees the coming ruin: there comes to Jeremiah his uncle's son, inviting him to buy the field in Anathoth which was in the hands of the enemy. And Jeremiah bought it to be a possession in coming days in his family.

The words of Jeremiah's conviction are short and plain: "There is nothing too hard for thee."

In that dark hour (Watchman, what of the night?) he sees a greater darkness still to come, but also he sees the coming day: "Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries . . . I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (xxxii. 37-44). "There is nothing too hard for thee."

And with this, Dr. Nairne suggests, should go the last half of xxxi. speaking of the New Covenant of Jehovah and His people: a Law written on their hearts: a Covenant as sure as the ordinances of sun and moon

and stars.

That field of Anathoth is like the fields of the green winter wheat, green in the days of the fall of all the sere and yellow leaves, and telling of the spring which lies beyond the coming winter.

It is usual to think of Jeremiah as a lamentable prophet: and yet, in some ways, he is the bravest of them all. He has no shield of pride or selfishness to defend him from the suffering of a most sensitive man, the pain such a man must feel to whom it falls as duty to condemn his fellow-men. No one loves Jerusalem more than he does. Yet he must condemn her as though he hated her.

This lover of Jerusalem must reverse the message of Isaiah and quench any courage which might have hoped to save the sacred city. Long ago he had spoken in the Temple court to those who flocked among the sacred buildings: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple

of the Lord are these."

And then, alluding to Micah: "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh. . . . I will do unto this house . . . as I have done unto Shiloh " (vii.). And: "Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy, for they are not the Lord's " (v.).

The sternness of the message is only emphasised by the scribe who has come after and inserted to mitigate

it: "but make not a full end."

This chapter v. is dated 625 B.C. And this misery is to go on thirty-eight more years. What vestige of hope will live on and be found in chapter xxxii.? Yet it is through this lifelong suffering that Jeremiah has learned to see the light of this dawn: to see it, though he knows that the darkest hours are still to come.

Much that was happening is unknown to us. Independently of Jeremiah there was effort after reformation.

There is the Deuteronomy Covenant in Josiah's reign. In his chapter xi., Jeremiah seems to support this movement: "Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. . . . "

It looks as though Jeremiah approved of the Deuteronomy movement. Also, unlike Amos or Isaiah, he urges in xvii. 21 that Israel will be blessed if the Sabbath is hallowed. And, again, in xxxiv. 8 he is urgent for the observance of the law of liberty for Hebrews and Hebrewesses, as in Deuteronomy xv. 12.

The false worship of his day is to his mind idolatry. You might say that, in his view, to be content with a religion which has gone on uninfluenced by Isaiah, is

idolatry.

And, indeed, there are signs that the conventional religion and the prophetic religion have diverged tarther and farther apart. The popular religion sinks lower and accepts new foreign idolatries. The prophetic religion becomes more defined.

Manasseh's reign had strengthened idolatry, as

Hezekiah's had strengthened the purer faith.

2 Kings xxi. will be an account written about 600 B.C. under Deuteronomy influence. Manasseh (it says) "built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord. . . he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he made his son to pass through the fire, and practised augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger." It is the language of Deuteronomy.

Jeremiah xv. says: "I will cause them to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for

that which he did in Jerusalem. . . . "

There can be no doubt as to the tradition concerning Manasseh's day. And the accusations as to worshipping all the host of heaven are new. Such worship came from Babylon. Not that you need go to Babylon for the offering of a son. You have only to remember

the story of Jephtha's daughter, or that Inscription of Mesha, or even the story of Abraham and Isaac. But the old offences are offensive in a new way, in that they ignore, now, Isaiah and Hosea and Amos. And there

have been added to them new offences.

In chapter xix. 13 Jeremiah speaks of "the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods." And 4, 5: "They have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt offerings unto Baal. . . . I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their

daughters. . . ."

You can see the diverging of the two religions in Jerusalem. Things which may once have been part of the Israelite religion-Gideon's name for God, Jephtha's sacrifice, David's teraphim, Solomon's obelisks, Elijah's altar on Carmel-have become an outrage and an abomination to the faithful, and these Israelite-Amorite customs have now added to themselves other customs which were unknown to Jephtha and Gideon and David and Solomon and Elijah. The condition of the Temple as described in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. viii.) with the "image of jealousy," and "every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel pourtrayed upon the wall round about," and "the women weeping for Tammuz," and "the worshipping the sun toward the east," implies a borrowing of foreign religions which is new. Nothing is standing still. The lower religion falls lower, as the higher rises higher.

In Jerusalem there were two religions: one a religion which degraded itself, even when Jehovah was one of its objects of worship, and sank so low, that it was not worth saving among the religions of the other nations from which it had ceased to be distinct. It had no dis-

tinctive fitness to be selected for survival: and side by side with this was a religion of men who were learning to see that their true worship of Jehovah could not be quenched, even though the Jewish city should be all in ruins and the Jewish people all in exile. The God whom they knew, must win.

Few moments in the history of man can have been more critical for man, than this agony of Jeremiah. His hope emerging is one of the "decisive victories" of our race. If I may dare to speak so, this agony of Jeremiah is a prophecy of the agony of Him who bore the shame and misery, and confessed the guilt, of His people, and who, when He alone knew what is the meaning of the ingratitude of sinful men, still hoped for us.

You are left in no doubt of what it cost Jeremiah. He is taught to stand firm, though from the first he shrinks from his mission. He is very sensitive to feel the hatred of his fellow-men. And all the while he feels the hatefulness of their faithlessness. It wounds him to the quick. To him it is some monstrous thing: contrary to all nature.

(ii. 32) "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days with-

out number."

(viii. 7) "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle-dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my

people know not the ordinance of the Lord."

Even the senseless waters obey. (v. 22) "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it? . . . But this people . . . they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in its season; that reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Israel is to Jeremiah a thing contrary to all nature, monstrous, impossible. "A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in

the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" And, through this wonder and horror, Jeremiah is to stand strong as steel, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass: he that is (ah, Lord God!)—he that is a child!

First, for God's sake, he is to renounce his own people. (xv. 19) "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: they shall return unto thee, but thou

shalt not return unto them."

But the cost of it! the grief of it!

"Cursed be the day [we quoted] wherein I was born."

Jeremiah in the stocks, and in the court of the guard, and in the dungeon—"And they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: and Jeremiah sank in the mire": that is an outward visible sign of the inward spiritual agony which he comes through, in the truth of his soul, true to the holiness of God, and also true to his fellow-countrymen. The memory of Jeremiah influences

"Job." And, still more, the Second Isaiah.

He is like Hosea in this. And yet he goes beyond Hosea. It is not, I say, only that we happen to know more of his inmost thoughts than we know of Hosea's; nor that we see him taking a fuller part in the life of his country: these are not the main reasons for feeling that he has gone beyond the places to which Hosea came. His claim is this: that he knew, as Hosea did not know, that the love of Jehovah could not be defeated by the ingratitude of Israel. And the outward and visible sign of that conviction was the buying of the Anathoth field: the field of hope, green with the winterwheat of hope, in the gloomiest cold and mist of the late autumn days, beyond which lie the long winter months of Jerusalem's ruin and exile.

CHAPTER VIII.-EZEKIEL

How many Miles to Babylon?

Three score and ten.

Can I get there by candle-light?

Ay: and back again.

JEREMIAH began to prophesy in 626 B.C., Ezekiel in 592. That means that the fall of Jerusalem (587) happened when Jeremiah was already a man worn with griefs, and when Ezekiel was at the beginning of thinking his thoughts about life.

This young Ezekiel was among the captives "by the river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans," for five

years, and then began to prophesy.

Another five years, and Jerusalem, after a second siege, a siege this time of two years, was taken. He dates one prophecy fifteen years later: when he had been familiar fifteen years with the fact of this calamity. And his book, it seems (unlike Isaiah's and Jeremiah's), was carefully arranged as he himself chose to arrange it. He planned it all in one piece. So that, wherever you read in it, you are reading what he has decided to leave as his final message. It is one whole, orderly, deliberate book.

In chapter xi. 23: "The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain . . ." (which we call the Mount of Olives). God went away from the doomed Jerusalem two years before the siege began.

And in xliii. (xl. is dated 572 B.c.) you hear of the Lord's return that comes to pass in a dream: "Behold, the glory of the Lord returning from the way of the east. . . . And behold, the glory of the Lord filled

the house." God will return to the Temple.

He is writing in his book the story of all his visions. What he gives of his earlier visions, he gives after he has seen his later visions. This alone would account for a very different feeling in Ezekiel from what you find in Jeremiah.

Altogether it is as if Ezekiel could go more smoothly along the dreadful way over which Jeremiah had already given him a lead. Jeremiah was, indeed, strong as iron, but we can see at what a cost he was so

tempered.

Ezekiel (iii. 9) sets out at the beginning with a forehead harder than flint. Compared to Jeremiah, Ezekiel is very orderly and level and sane and cool. It has been said that he is not so much a prophet as a priest in prophet's clothing. I suppose that means that Ezekiel is less imaginative and more conventional than Ieremiah. Not that, to a modern Englishman, Ezekiel would have seemed anything but unconventional and eccentric. The prophets all do very strange things. And the word "sane" is hardly the first we should have chosen for any of them.

Look at chapter iv. Ezekiel, unconscious of anything that goes on round him, is sitting and sitting on the ground before a tile which, in a childlike make-believe, stands for Jerusalem. And round about on the top of his tile he has set an iron pan. And that is Babylon besieging Jerusalem. Is this quite . . . quite sane?

Yes, quite. This is a man who has set the whole of his deliberate heart upon Jerusalem. Put him in

Babylon, his heart is still at Ierusalem:

And I will come again, my love, Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

There is no danger of Ezekiel forgetting "thee, O Jerusalem," "by the waters of Babylon." He is now a man who has, for years, accepted the inevitable which we can watch Jeremiah slowly discovering to be the inevitable.

When we know Ezekiel (after twenty-five years of exile) he is reconciled to the inevitable and "making the best of" the actual situation in a very business-like way. Yet he also loves his people and the Holy City, and the mountains and hills and watercourses and valleys of his native land.

Now he sees the whole story, of past sin, of present

punishment of sin, of future pardon and peace. He confesses the past. He has hope for the future. He plans for the days that are to come, and his planning—his temple plans and his town plans—set the mind of the exile Jews to work, so that, when they did return, forty years later, some of them had a very clear scheme drawn up, of how a People of God must order their

lives and their state and their worship.

The dreams of Ezekiel determined what, later, Ezra and Nehemiah would do. What Ezekiel dreamed set captive Israel going over her ancient memories, collecting and arranging and making tidy and complete her old laws and histories. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem they returned with a clearly thought-out interpretation of their national history. They returned, bringing with them something very like the Five Books of Moses as we know them now. The Jews were Jewish at last. Especially you will notice their conviction of an almost unpardonable sin, a very nearly hopeless wickedness of Israel. They accept that.

Amos and Hosea and Isaiah look back to "good old days." In Amos v. 25, the days of the wilderness are spoken of as days when all went well. And, in Hosea, the pathos lies in the beauty of old days and the vileness of what is now. In the Valley of Achor (ii. 15) she shall learn to make answer "as in the days of her youth." It was a beautiful and happy past. Isaiah (i. 26) says: "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning." And in Jeremiah ii. 2 it is: "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals."

But in Ezekiel the Hebrews are bad from the beginning. (xvi. 3) "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was an Hittite." (vers. 45, 46) "Thine elder sister is Samaria . . . and thy younger sister is

Sodom."

(xx. 23-26) "Moreover I lifted up mine hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the nations... because they had not executed my

judgements, but had rejected my statutes, and had profaned my Sabbaths [you remember how little Amos or Isaiah valued the Sabbaths], and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. Moreover also I gave them statutes that were not good . . . and I polluted them in their own gifts in that they caused the firstborn to pass through the fire, that I might make them desolate. ' I gave them bad statutes! They deserved no better.

The penitence of Ezekiel for Israel is at full flood. There is nothing to be said for any age of theirs. And it is in this mood that the Books of the Law, as we know them, were chosen. This mood colours the Old Testament's story of Man: of Adam and Eve, and Cain, and the Flood, and the rest. They accept a world in which the Lord said "that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually."

That is not a very "young" view of life! It has become an accepted Jewish view by the time of their

Return.

Let anyone read the story of Saul as an experiment. And let him notice how Saul is condemned: a man for whom there was, from the beginning, no hope, and then let the reader turn to the old song of 2 Samuel i. How little that knows of the guilt that has darkened all Saul's life. "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives." The singer of that was forgetting and forgiving many things. Or else they were unknown in his day.

Ezekiel belongs to the later and more censorious day. He has Jeremiah's view (xvii. 9): "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who

can know it? I the Lord search the heart."

And this sense of inborn wickedness is nothing vague and dim in Ezekiel. He makes distinct accusations. He would claim to be speaking of his experience of real men.

The bad man is seen, as in a plain picture, for example, in xviii. The bad man is a robber, a shedder of blood; he eateth upon the mountains and sins in his neighbour's house; he wrongs the poor and needy and spoils by violence, and hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, and hath committed abomination, hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase. That is the bad man.

Hosea, too, had known this same bad man. (iv. 2) "Swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery"; (ver. 13) "they

sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains. . . .

And in Jeremiah vii. 9: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal. . . . ?" It is not an imaginary picture of society. The charges are very definite. The reader must try to imagine a world in which men are strongly tempted to do these things, for in such a world, it is clear, Ezekiel believed himself to live.

If with a great effort of the imagination a man could fancy himself in a society where these (and not uncharity and selfishness and insincerity and trust in money and the rest) were the besetting sins, he will, among other things, feel that the Ten Commandments could once be a voice of the living God speaking to the living conscience of men. The thought will probably be new to some readers.

In Ezekiel's view such idolatry and wickedness have utterly polluted Israel and Jerusalem. They, and not the big battalions of Nebuchadnezzar, account for the Exile. The Captivity is not an accident. It is a

purification.

And when the Temple has been burned clean of the pollution that was there in chapter viii., and the people have made long and bitter atonement for all the "abominations which they have committed," then, God, for His own name's sake, will restore them. Ezekiel has his chapter xi. as Jeremiah has his chapter xxxii.: "I will put a new spirit within you and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." And, beyond anything in Jeremiah, Ezekiel has those plans for a holy people offering a pure sacrifice in a

temple to which Jehovah has restored His glory. Ezekiel foresees this pardon after punishment, and it is like life from the dead. For two chapters' sake of Ezekiel, yea for three, we will for ever be grateful to Ezekiel: xxxiv., xxxvii., xlvii. In these you hear the Gospel spoken in the language of the Old Testament.

Those last chapters—xxxiii. to xlviii.—are the prophet's account of the New Jerusalem. In xxxiii. he foretells the end. (xxxiii. 33) "And when this cometh to pass, (behold, it cometh,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." At last, at last, Israel will be convinced. Now it is worth while for the prophet to speak. He will be listened to. And he speaks of new princes, and a new land, mountains and hills and streams, and a new people, as it were, alive from the dead: Ephraim restored as well as Judah. Of the destruction of all enemies and the return of the Lord to a Temple all in fair and sacred order: the altar, the sacrifices, the priests, the holy days, the twelve tribes, all hallowed by the atonement that will have been made.

It is God's doing, and not man's. It is life from the dead. In xxxiv, there is the vision of the Good Shepherd. (ver. 11) "For thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. . . . I will seek that which was lost, and will bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick. . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd."

That is the new King over against the Kings of the past. And xxxvii. is the vision of the calling up of the people, the dead and lost people: the bones scattered in the valley that "was full of bones." Language of man, even though it were of St. Paul himself, cannot go further in daring: in its insistence that what is impossible will happen. In Jeremiah it was a cry: (xxxii. 17) "Ah Lord God! there is nothing too hard for thee." In Ezekiel it is a great scene which very deliberately unfolds its details: "The valley, and it was full of bones; . . . and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, . . . Prophesy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. . . . So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold an earthquake, and the bones came together, bone to his bone . . . but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

Once more "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters": the Lord, the Giver of life: who spake

by the prophets: the Spirit of Adoption.

And in xlvii. there is the stream of waters which issued out from under the temple-threshold restored, "... and he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. And, again ... a thousand ... and the waters were to the knees ... and again ... to the loins. [And again] ... and it was a river that I could not pass through: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through." So, out of the House of God, there issues eastward towards the desert valley and the bitter land and the Dead Sea a stream of healing waters.

Where it comes the banks grow green, the trees make a pleasant shade, the Dead Sea is alive with fish, the short springy turf—with thyme, I suspect—is green on the sandy shore of the lake. And the turf is spread

with the brown drying nets of fishermen, and there are fishermen's cottages, and blue curling smoke, I expect, mounts lazily in the peaceful early morning air, from the chimneys, and drifts among the sycamores: and in the sunlit mistiness I seem to see, very far off, two women come out and stand at the doorways, and talk. Who are these, in the cottage doorways? and children with them: two small boys apiece? Who are these, O fisherman's wife? What is his name: and his? And you, her neighbour, what do you call your little sons at the lakeside of this dream?

Peter and Andrew and James and John are their names. For this is the River of the Gospel seen long before by the man who learned in Babylon that God must have His New Jerusalem, His Holy City—that

hope is true.

The hope which Jeremiah and Ezekiel learned to hope, became the inheritance of the Jewish people, and, from them, has become the inheritance of all mankind: theirs to claim: theirs to know, if they will put themselves to school with the believers in God who trace

their descent from the Hebrew prophets.

There is, very likely, a stage at which the Jewish religion is scarcely distinguishable from the other Semitic religions, and has much in common with the religion of all other races. We know little (and guess much) about that remote stage. But, as the Jewish religion comes out into clearer view, it becomes more and more distinct from every other religion. have watched this Jewish idea of God, unfolding its meaning-or, say, God unfolding His meaning to the Jews. May you not say that, when you reach this stage, when you come to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, you have come to a stage at which it is proved, now, to have had as its secret from the beginning, a power to be, some day, different in kind from all the faiths once indistinguishable from it? The "amœba-cell reacting to stimulus" has evolved into this answer of the Children of God, to the God who has revealed Himself to them.

They say Ezekiel's cherubim were borrowed. They had mounted guard already at the gates of Mesopotamian palaces. People can see the originals now in the museums, alabaster monuments of the industry of slaves working for brutal lords, monsters with bull-bodies and eagle-wings and Assyrian-bearded heads. If these are the originals of Ezekiel's cherubim (Ezek. i. 24-28), it was a wonderful charity that could "admit them to that equal sky." And what shall we think of the Spirit whose touch could so transform them into the "living creatures" who, in the Apocalypse, cry, "Holy, holy, holy," to the Lamb of God?

CHAPTER IX.-ISAIAH THE SECOND

As dying, and behold we live.

From Isaiah xl. to Isaiah lv. are sixteen wonderful chapters. The reader is wise to read them, by them-

selves, as a separate book.

Do not, until later, try to unravel the composition of them, but attend to their general message, as though you were sitting to listen to some great music, without being able to follow the composer's construction. Beautiful words return and great phrases repeat themselves, and speak of sorrows that have lasted long and are coming to an end: to an end which comes into clearer and clearer view.

They are like great movements of music. And at intervals the sequence is interwoven with another sequence (at xli. 8, xlii. 1 and 18, xliii. 5, xlix. 1, 1. 4) by words about a servant of Jehovah who is by degrees defined until he is seen at the end (lii. 13-liii.) standing as a mysterious figure against the background of the rest of these chapters.

The rest speak of Israel and Babylon and Babylon's idols, and the Holy One of Israel and Cyrus approach-

ing to set Israel free out of her dreary suffering for her old sins.

Someone who has lived with these sayings (his own or another man's) has composed them into their present oneness: but it is clear they are the moods, not of a day but of years, taunting, and hymns, and pain, and hope, and deep mysterious thought. Many moods of the Babylonian exile: and over against them this suffering servant. The two themes work themselves out.

by turns, and together.

We have to do with a man who has known nothing but captivity. As a child he knew it. He says to Babylon: "Upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke." Perhaps, as a boy, he has seen his own "aged" hustled and insulted and oppressed. There is no suggestion that he knows of Jerusalem anything but its loved name. He begins, where Ezekiel ends, in a dreamland Jerusalem. But his dream, his New Jerusalem, was to be seen many times again (liv.) by St. John, by St. Bernard, by John Bunyan, by William Blake and many more.

"O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies and thy gates of carbuncles, and

all thy border of pleasant stones."

What have these sixty years taught?

The answer is that they have taught one man, at least, to see Israel's past and present and future, all

luminous with the light of God.

God is seen, as He was scarcely seen before, to be so great. The other "gods" are thin shrunken little things, poor withered divinities. Look at the "images" and his contempt for them, in xl. 18, xli. 21, xliv. 6, xlv. 20, xlvi. 5. His scorn has a strange eloquence, at once so passionate and so deliberate.

"Yea, he maketh a god" (xliv. 15). Read the setting of that. Or read of Bel and Nebo burdening the oxen that drag their car, or carried by men upon their

shoulders. "They carry him!" (xlvi. 7).

Over against these is the Holy One of Israel. Look at Him and His stars, for example: which He never names, but makes you see.

(xl. 26)

"Lift up your eyes on high and see,

Who hath created these?

He that bringeth out their host by number:

He calleth them all by name;

By the greatness of his might and for that he is strong in power,

Not one is lacking."

God, there, a kind of Shepherd whose flock is all the stars.

And this God has chosen and called Israel to be His own people from the very beginning. Again and again the thought is of Egypt and the Exodus. To the writer, even more, if that is possible, than to the other Old Testament writers, Jehovah is He "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

That leading of Israel through the sea, is typical, for him, of what God has been to His people. And since there is no doubt about that former bringing out of Egypt, there is no doubt, either, that God can bring

Israel out of Babylon.

And now Israel is ready to challenge all the other gods, "Yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together." Do anything. But

you do nothing.

And meanwhile Our God does all. He declares His truth. He guards His people. He foretold, to Jeremiah and Ezekiel (as we know), that this captivity is only suffered to go on, so as to give a new life to Israel. When Cyrus appears, it is as though this prophet said: There! I knew he was coming! How could Nebo-images and Bel-images stop Our God bringing our deliverer?

And now Cyrus is there. And the prophet sees what is happening, in the light of his faith, and appeals

to Israel to see it so, too: to see all that they have suffered, as from God: to have thoughts of what they are: to see themselves as God's chosen servant, God's witnesses, to all the world of men.

So his message begins with consolation and hope. (xl.) "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people . . . her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned; she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Babylon is doomed, as (in Nahum) Nineveh was doomed. "O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God!" (Nahum i. 15 and Isaiah xl. 9-11); and, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd" (that is Isaiah xl. 11 remembering Ezekiel xxxiv.).

Yet Israel is slow to believe in such greatness for herself. (xlii.) "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf,

as my messenger that I send?"

Their miseries have dulled them. They do not realise that it is because they are God's people that these things have happened to them. Amos would have known. "You only have I known, therefore ..." (iii. 2). "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord? He against whom we have sinned." "But now" (xliii.) ... "now, thus saith the Lord . . . O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." (That is another Exodus allusion.) "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears" (xliii. 8).

(xliv. 21) "Remember, . . . thou art my servant: O Israel . . . I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions . . . return unto me; for I have re-

deemed thee."

And then there is a chorus, like Christmas angels at Bethlehem. Sing, heavens; shout, earth, mountains, forest, every tree, for the Lord hath redeemed. . . .

And that joy is not, merely, that we who have been

so unhappy in prison are to be set free: it is that Our God has been proved true. God is confirming His word to His servants (xliv. 26). It is He who is sending His Cyrus to bring the release He promised to His prophets. He has called Cyrus for Israel's sake.

Chapters xlv. and xlvi. have a contrast of this power of Our God with the impotence of Bel and Nebo, and xlvii. a triumphant taunting of humiliated Babylon.

Chapter xlviii. turns to the hesitating Jews. Can they not see the working of God in all this? The pain had to be. The pardon and peace must follow. "Behold I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." How could history have followed any other course than that which it is, in fact, following? "Go ye forth of Babylon... the Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob." He who led Israel and gave them waters from the rock in the wilderness, will lead them, now, once again.

Chapter xlix. turns to "the isles" and "the peoples," and calls them to attend to what is happening. Israel (as Jeremiah was) has been chosen from the very beginning. "Thou art my servant... in whom I will be glorified." If Israel has doubted, it was because Israel has taken short views. So long a labour was needed because the end is so divinely great: "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." So he "whom man despiseth, whom the nation abhorreth," is one to whom Kings shall arise, whom Princes shall worship.

Jehovah cannot forget Zion, or forsake her. She shall have children, many and honourable: she who was bereaved, solitary, an exile.

In l. Jehovah has never put her away (it is Hosea's

parable once more).

And then the servant Israel is heard telling how the lesson is being understood. It is Israel, in so far as Israel understands, who speaks now, as the servant of the Lord. I speak as I am taught. Morning by morning I learn to suffer. I cease to rebel. "I gave my

back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." (It is an echo of Ezekiel.)

Then follows an answering of music against music: (li.) "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness. . . . Attend unto me, O my people . . . my law, my light, my righteousness are gone forth . . .

fear no reproach, be not dismayed. . . .

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. . . . And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. . . .

"I, even I, am he that comforteth you. . . .

"Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk the cup ... and drained it. ... Behold, I have taken the cup of staggering from thine hand. . . .

(lii.) "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O

Zion. . . .

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that . . . publisheth peace! . . .

"Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places

of Jerusalem. . . .

"Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, . . . ye that bear the vessels of the Lord."

It is more like music than language. The phrases used before return, thronging upon each other, gathered into one culmination of exultant happiness, as these, the redeemed, go out, by Cyrus' decree, to begin the life-from-the-dead of the New Jerusalem (536 B.C.).

And then at lii. 13 and liii. there is a change, as though he would gather again all the hints that have been glanced at, of the meaning of the progress through suffering to the triumph of which he has been speaking. The tone is solemner, as of one revealing, as indeed is here revealed, a mystery into which it is awful to look: the mystery of the world redeemed to God.

through the suffering of God's chosen servant. The servant becomes more personal: not a people personified, but One Mystical Person, would you not say?

This last passage is a song of five stanzas, of which the first proposes the theme. The suffering servant has, here, become One, for the task is too great for a multitude. It is such as only one lonely man can do.

All Israel had come to think herself to be chosen from her birth, as Jeremiah was. Yet this holy atoning is seen to be beyond the reach of all Israel. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken," it says now: though it had said before that "my people" was being stricken for the salvation of all the peoples (xlix. 6-8, liii. 8).

And men gaze at this One in wonder: Kings: and my people: and all mankind: all who realise now that "surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," this One whose "visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men."

"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."
"He" is as solitary as the High Priest on the day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies.

We did not understand, they say. We thought God punished Him for His own sins, and He was bruised for our iniquities, winning our peace, our healing.

And through this, He has triumphed. God has made "his soul an offering for sin. . . . My righteous servant shall justify many: he shall bear [away] their iniquities, because he poured out his soul unto death and [allowed himself to be] numbered with the transgressors."

Here comes into clear focussing the vision which was seen dimly and confusedly in the experience of Israel, of Zion, of the saints of God's people—of Jeremiah, for example, who also says: "I was like a gentle lamb that

is led to the slaughter."

Two things meet here: the instinctive sense of man that he must offer sacrifice to God: the instinct which seems natural to man, so that you find it taken for granted from the beginning in the Bible: man an altar-

building creature, as the birds are nest-building creatures: the instinctive sense to which all the primitive religions bear witness, and which among the Jews was evolving into sin-offerings and sacrifices of atonement: that is here. And also, the experience of the Chosen People, not in their efforts to worship in any holy place, only, but in all they have come through: learning so slowly and at such a cost: all the knowledge that they have won in that chastening in exile.

These two meet here, and, in their meeting, something appears, higher than either seemed to suggest by itself.

Five hundred, six hundred years later, the Ethiopian was reading this chapter, in his chariot. "I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other?" And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus.

Isaiah liii. is what Israel had learned in 536 B.C. We have a contemporary Persian writing. It is a proclamation, put out by Cyrus soon after he came to Babylon.

In it (as Is. xlv. 5 suggests) Cyrus knows nothing of the God of Israel. He has come to Babylon in the name of the Babylonian god, Marduk, who has "looked around and sought a righteous prince" to reign in the place of Nabonaid of Babylon. Marduk has looked for "a prince after his heart" whom he may "take by his hand "-and Marduk has found Cyrus, King of Anshan, and "like a friend and comrade he went at his side." Therefore, "I, Cyrus, the king of multitudes, the great king, the mighty king, King of Babylon, King of Sumer and Akkad, King of the four quarters, whose rule Bel and Nebo love [have been careful and just in dealing with all the cities] . . . their sighing I stilled, their vexations I ended. . . . The gods . . . whom Nabonaid had brought to Babylon, by the command of Marduk, the great lord, [I conducted home to their own countries I caused them to take up their abode safely in their own shrines in gladness of heart."

Cyrus hopes that these gods returning to their own homes, will pray for him, "before Bel and Nebo to Marduk" his lord.

It is curious to turn to this inscription from Isaiah xlv., xlvi., and, in the light of it, to reconsider the idea that the Jews learned monotheism from Persia.

The view of Cyrus is that the whole world bows down to Cyrus, and Cyrus bows down to all the lesser gods, and all the lesser gods bow down to Bel and Nebo, and Bel and Nebo bow down to Marduk. That is a clearly defined scheme. But there is not much room in it for Isaiah xl.-lv. If this was the school, it was a remarkable scholar that learned monotheism there.

Also there have been "monotheists" who were incapable of writing Isaiah liii.

CHAPTER X.—EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

What are these golden builders doing Near mournful ever-weeping Paddington?

THE Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are a continuation of Chronicles. The last verses of Chronicles are repeated as the first verses of Ezra.

And Chronicles name six generations after the Zerubbabel of Haggai and Zechariah of 520 B.C. So that Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah will date about 320 B.C. They will be telling, here, a story of a hundred

years ago.

But the maker of the books has, it seems, got "contemporary material" for his story. He has got writings of Ezra and of Nehemiah, and of men who lived in their time, besides ancient lists which had been kept with religious care. You are listening to Ezra himself in vii. 27-viii. 34 and ix. 1-15 in Ezra. In Nehemiah the great man himself is telling you, inimitably, his own story (i.-viii. 73, xii. 27-43, xiii. 4-31). And someone who was an eye-witness gives his evidence in Nehemiah viii., ix., x.

Before anything else, a person should read those passages, and then, perhaps, it would be well to ask, What are Ezra and Nehemiah doing in 458 and 444 B.C.?

You will think of the Jews as a people who have had now a long experience. They have been much changed by Amos and Hosea and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel. And, beyond any message which the prophets delivered, there was life itself influencing them: the hard facts of the experience of those 150 years.

And from the Exile of Jehoiachin and Ezekiel to Ezra's day is another 150 years. That is a long schooling in captivity. And what some men were learning there is suggested by Ezekiel's book and by Isaiah xl.-lv. And Isaiah lvi.-lxvi. is thought to be of about Ezra and

Nehemiah's own time.

Now, Ezra and Nehemiah are evidently quite clear in their minds as to what they have to do when they get to Jerusalem. They know exactly what has to be done if the Jews are to live worthily of their calling as God's people. They have, now, a history of their past, and a code of their Law, which give them the clearest possible directions. Ezra, the Scribe, came to Jerusalem to teach the Chosen People the Law of God. And, after him, Nehemiah reinforced Ezra's devout and scholarly learning with his strenuous and impetuous energy.

Ezra, by himself, in those first fourteen years, may have failed. But when Nehemiah arrived he secured a fair hearing for Ezra. And Nehemiah secured for the Law a walled city in which the law-abiding citizens could

live secure.

Perhaps the difference between the two men is sufficiently illustrated by the comparison between Ezra plucking out his own hair when the Jews disobeyed the Law, and Nehemiah also plucking out hair—much hair —but not his own.

We have but glimpses of history here. There are long gaps-between Haggai and Ezra; and, again, between 458 and 444. But we have enough to tell us of Jerusalem becoming the city whose citizens are beginning to be what we now think of as "Jewish." We, very likely, have been accustomed to read this kind of Jewishness back into the Israelite past, and to think of Joshua and Samuel and David and Solomon and Hezekiah and Josiah as being "Jewish" in this sense.

But, in fact, it is only here that we have at last arrived at a Jewish people with an ideal which accounts for the Jews being what they were in the days that matter most to us—the days of Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee and Jerusalem.

In Nehemiah viii. 4, for example, you find the beginning of the synagogues, the earliest pulpit. All the people who were old enough to understand were gathered in the broad place before the water-gate, and Ezra the Scribe brought out the book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And the Law was explained to the people from early morning until midday. As all men are sons of Adam, so all preachers are sons of Ezra. This is the Abraham of pulpits whose seed is as the sand of the seashore.

Do not, however, think of Ezra as imposing his opinions upon his congregation. He is not "laying down the law." Indeed, he is doing something of a very different kind. He is committing the Law to the

people.

Priests at first, and then prophets, too, had had an exclusive possession of knowledge. Now it is committed to all the congregation. They are to become a priestly and prophetic people: a society of which every member "knows and understands." That is what it meant when "they read in the law distinctly; and they gave the sense." "In their heart will I write it," Jeremiah had said. That is what is being attempted here.

And then, as if to link up this new development with the old first beginnings of the process, the people "found written in the law, how that the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month." The people of the city of Jerusalem look back across 800 years. They claim unbroken descent from those wandering dwellers in the camel-hair tents. The possessors of this written code that has been so long in the making, as though they were evolutionists before their time,

maintain that it was all implied in the unwritten customary Law of Mosaic days. So they make those "booths," "everyone upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the broad place of the water-gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim." To them the booths suggest an unbroken continuity. Like the flint knives in Joshua, and the altars of turf or of unhewn stone in Deuteronomy, they link Israel's earliest memories to those latest days.

Now you are arriving at a people of the Pentateuch: as Mohammed called them, "the People of the Book."

In Nehemiah x. you have a list of those who were sealed in this Covenant: this new-and-old Covenant. And you find the people, with Nehemiah for leader in the movement, separating themselves to be a holy people: "separating themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one that had knowledge and understanding . . [thev] entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God" . . . (it is one of themselves that is speaking) we would not buy on the Sabbath Day, we would forgo debts each seventh year, we would pay a yearly temple-tax, etc., etc.

This setting out under Nehemiah and Ezra is like another Exodus: a setting out again on another stage of their long journey. It was still 444 years "before

Christ."

We know them at the end of those 444 years. We stand there, again, and watch them arrive. We watch them and wonder, a little disheartened. Was it necessary that their caravan should come in, in this condition?

That Jewishness of the Jews! Could a people not have been faithful to the prophetic revelation without becoming so narrowed, so hardened? A Society must be organised. Its members must be disciplined. But could the "heavenly treasure" not have survived without being packed so stiffly, until it shaped itself into the shape of such an "earthen vessel" as this?

The reader must ask some other writer for the answer

to this question.

Let us console ourselves by remembering two things: the severity of the ordeals through which these people were enabled, by these institutions, to preserve their peculiar heritage: and the value of that which, as a matter of history, they have bequeathed to men.

The severity of the ordeal is felt as you remember the foreign allurements and the foreign persecutions which they resisted. What they, in their own way, were doing, caused them to be persecuted as a fanatical

and an inhuman race.

Hellas allured them and they resisted. Hellas persecuted them and they resisted. They came out of Hellas, as out of Egypt, and out of Babylon, more Jewish than ever.

And then, within those increasingly formal institutions, there was, it is evident, room for a life of men to

whom God was the living God.

After Ezekiel had become classical to the Jews, and the successors of Ezekiel had worked out in detail the national order of which he dreamed, it was still possible for some Jew to be thinking Isaiah xl.-lv. And Malachi is found somewhere among the Jews who brought the Law back from Babylon. And the Book of Jonah tells how some Jew could look out at the great foreign human world. And there is the Book of Job. And there are the Wisdom books. And the Psalms. It is to be remembered that the Psalms were sung in the Temple, however formal many of the priests may have become, and however industriously useless may have been the learning of the Scribes. And side by side with an unbroken custom of morning and evening sacrifice, there was the reading, when its day came round, of Isaiah liii. to say what sacrifice can mean.

Consider the institution of the Passover, again. It came to them out of an immemorial past. Moses himself is spoken of as continuing, not inventing, the custom (Exodus v. 1-3 and x. 9-11). Our Lord condescended to receive this custom as an heirloom. What-

ever any priests in Herod's Temple made of it, it was such that Jesus could take it and make it into "the Lord's Service." And (in like manner) the human experience of Israel was something which He could take, as He took the bread and wine, and consecrate it.

A man may have notions of how this tradition might have survived, of how it might have happened in some other way which he prefers. As a matter of history, this is the way it did happen. The faith of the earlier prophets came to Ezekiel, and from Ezekiel it passes on to Ezra, who helps to get it wrought into the very being of the Jewish people. And Nehemiah gave it walls to live behind, until it needed no walls (as Zechariah foretold), and then "not one stone was left upon another."

At the present stage, in Ezra and Nehemiah, you find a people who have accepted a view of their own history which requires a certain manner of conversation. They have been called to be holy, and they have been unholy. God is gracious, and they are penitent. Look at Ezra's mood.

Ezra ix. 5, etc.: "At the evening oblation [that is, at the offering of the daily atoning sacrifice for the sins of Israel] I arose up [says Ezra] from my humiliation, even with my garment and my mantle rent; and I fell upon my knees. . . . O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God. . . . Since the days of our fathers we have been exceeding guilty unto this day."

Ezra is penitent, and he draws after him a penitent people, accepting the "exceeding guiltiness" of which the prophets have at last convicted the common con-

science.

Once solitary prophets had accused a resentful people. Now the voice of the prophets has become the people's conscience. The people is self-condemned. The city confesses its sin. That they are not as Sodom and Gomorrah is owing only to God's patience and pity. They live by making atonement, There is an oblation every evening.

In Nehemiah this penitence issues in vehemence to service: vehemence to obey the Law of "our" God, and to see to it that others obey. And others do obey. They will put away foreign wives: wives who were Moabitesses and the like. No memory of Ruth occurred to stop them. And usury between Jew and Jew is illegal (Neh. v.). And they close the gates at dark on the Sabbath against Tyrian fishmongers (xiii. 19). They entered into a curse to walk in God's law (x. 29).

In such formal ways as these they prove the penitence and gratitude in which Israel came out of Babylon. Yet the significance of their return and of their resolves cannot be misunderstood. Nor, yet, the temper in

which they came.

Ezra viii. 21: "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way, for us, and for our

little ones, and for all our substance.

"For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good. . . ."

Was there ever any people who set out into any future, quite like this: with "our" God, and our little

ones, and our sacred vessels, and our Law?

It was common for a people to have a national god, and to believe in his favour. So Asshur went with the Assyrians. So, perhaps, long ago, Jehovah had gone out with the armies of Israel. And every victory would establish with a people the conviction of the deity of their god.

But this people goes out convinced of the Deity of their God, by a century of exile and dishonour: convinced by their very suffering that God has had a special care for them: "our God," he says, and "our God." They go out upon their journey with no other pur-

They go out upon their journey with no other purpose in their mind than to restore the worship of this God who has suffered, in their shame, so great a dishonour among the nations. They carry with them silver

and gold, "of silver vessels an hundred talents; of gold an hundred talents; and twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold. And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord, and the vessels are holy. . . ." Here you have, described in matter-of-fact history, such a people as you see dimly in the primitive tradition: a people bent on becoming the worshippers of God. "Let us go," says Moses to Pharaoh—"let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord"; and, indeed, worship is what this people lives for and lives by. "Let us go and do sacrifice." Ezra might have said to Artaxerxes.

Besides their bowls of gold and their silver vessels

for the Temple, they bring the Law.

So they set out, even those that understood least of Isaiah the Second or Malachi, upon the four last centuries B.c. The Jewish religion has become distinct, now, from all the other religions. And what the Ten Commandments can guard is guarded now. Now, what the Levitical Code can secure is safe.

CHAPTER XI.—DANIEL

The human face divine.

It is accepted now, I suppose, that the Book of Daniel is of the time when the Greek or half-Greek Antiochus Epiphanes was trying to cause the Jews to cease from being Jewish. The thrilling story of the revolt of the Maccabees can be read in the Apocrypha. It is so fascinating a story that, in the Middle Ages, Judas Maccabæus counted as one of the seven worthies, and went mumming with Pompey and Hector and Jonathan and the others.

For our purpose it is a story of a people to whom had been committed the Oracles of God, fighting what seemed a desperate war in defence of their sacred trust.

As you read the Book of Daniel, bearing in mind that this struggle is its background, you are struck with the absence of any thought of any remotest possibility of these Jews being untrue to their Judaism. That is bred in their bone now, if the writer is a trustworthy witness. They have been people of the Law, now, for nearly ten generations.

Read, for example, the speech given to Mattathias, the father of the five hero-sons, when he saw the blasphemies that were committed—the abomination of deso-

lation, for example, on the altar in the Temple:

"Woe is me! wherefore was I born to see the destruction of my people, and the destruction of the holy city, and to dwell there when it was given into the hand of the enemy, the sanctuary into the hand of aliens? . . . behold, our holy things and our beauty and our glory are laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned them. Wherefore should we live any longer?

"And Mattathias and his sons rent their clothes, and

put on sack-cloth and mourned exceedingly."

And it would be a slow blood that did not stir at Mattathias' defiance of the King's officers that were enforcing the apostasy: "If all the nations that are in the . . . king's dominions hearken unto him, to fall away each one from the worship of his fathers . . . yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. . . ."

So a county challenges an empire. It is like watch-

ing David go out to meet the giant Philistine.

One has only to think of Jeremiah and his neighbours—the neighbours that offer incense on all the house-tops, after Babylonian fashions—to feel the contrast between the loneliness of the solitary man who stood for a pure worship of Jehovah, then, and the national movement of the Jews as one people, now.

And in Daniel, at any rate, there is no suggestion of wavering or hesitation. It never occurs to us that Daniel will forsake "the purpose of his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with

the wine which he drank."

It has never, even from our childhood, seemed possible to imagine that either Shadrach or Meshach or Abed-nego can pay the smallest attention to the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer,

and all kinds of music, or fall down and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar the King has set up.

These people are Jewish now. They will live and die by the Priestly Code. They are God's people, and they

know it. Their enemies are God's enemies.

It will not be claimed for the Book of Daniel that it has a complete appreciation of all human history. Classical readers will be sorry to find Alexander the Great figuring as a he-goat. Alas! in the Book of Daniel, to be Greek is to be merely animal. In this history, the Jews are the only human people. In this geography, Judæa is the only glorious land.

But when the reader has dwelt a little on this, he may go on to think: It would have been ill for the human race if Jews had been less obstinately Jewish: if they had not been prepared to be martyrs for their faith martyrs and soldiers, too: if their religion had not been

such as to be inextinguishable.

And then, as a reader is weighing this well, he will begin to watch what it was that nerved these heroes of the faith to endure and to survive. Their faith is such that it cannot be quenched. Their confidence in their mission, now, is such that there is no suggestion of the early prophets' dread of Israel being extinguished because of their sins. Checked at its natural issue in daily sacrifices in the temple and daily obedience in Jerusalem to "Leviticus," their faith springs up, irrepressible, and becomes a hope higher than had been dreamed before.

God's Day and the day of Israel must come. Angels and men may resist the coming of the Day, but come it must.

In his book, written for the secret encouragement of the faithful, under figures-of-speech which the faithful can interpret, and which will be unintelligible to their enemies should these happen to see the book, Daniel tells the story of the unelect nations, preying, rending, brutal peoples—peoples who are like unto a son of an animal, beasts with horns, down to that one last worst horn, Antiochus Epiphanes.

(vii. 9, etc.) "I beheld till thrones were placed and one

that was Ancient of Days did sit: his raiment was white as snow. . . .

"A fiery stream issued and came forth before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgement was set, and the books were opened. . . .

"I beheld at that time . . . till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and he was given to be burned with fire . . . and I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him . . . one like unto a son of man. . . . And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Over against the beastly masks of the carnivorous bear and the others, there is this Human Face: one like unto a son of man. It seems it was the face of the angel of the Old Testament Church at Jerusalem. And, so to see these antagonists, is to feel that it is incredible that so animal, so low a power of Syrian Greeks shall

overthrow so high a power of the holy people.

You feel, as you read, the conviction of the Jews to be invincible. In face of this conviction all trust in the big battalions, all matter-of-fact considerations give way. It is here that the Jews are tempered to a vehemence of faith which bursts the limits of the grave, and is too proud to endure the contradiction of death. If death makes a difficulty, death must go. We will no more believe in death.

The Saints will rise from the graves and live (xii. 2). So, in the Old Testament, a hope arises and the Jews look forward with a new sight. Two generations later you find, in the Book of Enoch (xxxvii.-lxi.), how this hope has worked its way into men's minds. This Angel of the Ancient Church has become the Messiah (xlv., xlvi.).

"On that day mine Elect One will sit on the throne of glory and make choice among [men] . . . and on

that day I will cause mine elect to dwell among [mine elect], and I will transform the heaven and make it an

eternal blessing and light.

"And I will transform the earth and make it a blessing and cause mine elect ones to dwell upon it. . . ." (xlvi.) "And there I [Enoch] saw One who had a head of days, and his head was white like wool, and with him was another whose countenance had the appearance of a man and his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels.

"And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son

of Man, who he was and whence he was. . . .

"And he answered and said unto me, This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness, with whom dwelleth righteousness, and who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him. . . . And he will put down kings from their thrones and kingdoms, because they do not extol and praise him, nor thankfully acknowledge whence the kingdom was bestowed upon them . . . and the hearts of the holy were filled with joy . . . and the prayer of the righteous was heard, and the blood of the righteous required before the Lord of Spirits."

That is seventy years later than Daniel. It is the same vision, but clearer now, though perhaps now the enemies are not Greek Pagans but Jewish Sadducees, and the righteous are not Maccabees but Pharisees.

It is the most definite Messianic prophecy we have, and it is a singular example of what has been happening. Faith has broken the bounds of our known earth's matter-of-fact. When other lesser faiths would faint and be weary and utterly fall, the Jewish faith mounts up with wings, as eagles, and soars away into heaven and is free.

The French chaplain, asked by a great French lord for some concise defence of the Faith, answered: "Sire, les juifs"; and, indeed, in a sense which he little intended, their story compels belief.

If to the Jews, now they have become invincibly Jewish, earth seems an impossible place—why, then,

they realise that heaven is there all the while, and in the strength of that vision, they survive on earth. They draw back the veil and there is *Revelation* (in Latin), or (in Greek) an *Apocalypse*, and in the light of that, they endure, knowing that God's anointed, the Messiah, the Christ will come.

That is the conviction which grew stronger among them in the last centuries B.C.

And so—very much as the old law was written over again by men who read into the old law their later view of what the Law must be—so, now, the old prophecies got written over again. And now, as you read, you cannot clearly tell where Amos, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah have been edited: where the Messianic hopes of a later day have made their way in among the ancient messages of woe. You cannot tell.

So Jeremiah is speaking in xxii. of perfectly earthly kings: Josiah who was just, Jehoahaz "that goeth away," Jehoiakim who strives "to excel in cedar,"

Coniah who will never return.

And then appears a different figure.

"In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be

called, the Lord our righteousness."

You are left wondering. The name of Jeremiah's last King, "Zedekiah," means "the Lord our Righteousness." Yet this is no true prophecy of Zedekiah's reign. And Jeremiah, or Baruch, had ample opportunity to rescind the prophecy if the childless, blinded exile was all that had been meant.

Did Jeremiah leave it as a Messianic prophecy? Did

someone, later, introduce it? You cannot tell.

And, in Isaiah, the prophecies of the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah, dealing so severely with gloomy, obstinate, practical affairs, have among them sudden breaks, as of the sun shining through on a day of storm: prophecies where God shines through the obscure history of earth. Suddenly, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." The veil has been withdrawn, there is "revelation," there is "apocalypse," and the heavenly

and the impossible is seen. Did Isaiah make the prophecy? Or did someone, later, introduce it? (xi.) "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; ... and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord; ... with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. . . .

"And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb.

"And the leopard shall lie down with the kid. . . ." And ix. (our Christmas Lesson): "The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light . . . for unto us a child is born . . . Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." When were these words said—between 700 and 170 B.C.?

Chapters xxiv.-xxvii. are not thought to belong to any time near Isaiah's. Amos and Hosea are both thought to have had a chapter added at the end. No one can deny some rewriting. And scholars are not

agreed how much is rewritten.

But, even if an ordinary reader cannot date the developments of this Messianic hope, this looking forward to a triumph of God and of His righteous people, its dates were undoubtedly, on any reckoning, many vears B.C.

Its beginnings are in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Its culmination is in Daniel and Enoch. It is ready and awaiting the coming of Him, in obedience to whom we

"Thy kingdom come."

CHAPTER XII.—THE PSALMS

The singing masons building roofs of gold.

THERE are many people who, if anyone asked them, What have the Jews done for mankind? would answer, They have made, and they have given us, the Psalter.

And, I suppose, it is in the Psalms that Israel's message has made itself felt in a way in which no history could teach it.

For, here, the words become our own words.

are not looking on at what they say, from outside. We are, for ourselves, feeling again what the words can mean. They have become all men's songs in the house

of this life's pilgrimage.

To enter so into the Psalms, is like going, let me say, into Westminster Abbey. A man might feel, there, a spirit of the place, a spirit which has been alive in a great people through long ages. Its making and its hallowing are not the work of one man, or of one age. What was built long ago is hallowed by the reverence of all the ages which have come after. If you had to name one name, whom would you name? Our schoolchildren would think most of the nameless soldier, the "unknown" whose body lies in the nave. would think of Eleanor of Castile or Henry VII.'s mother, the aged Lady Margaret or Mary of Scots, or Elizabeth of England. And then to many minds it would be surprising that any name should be remembered, and Edward the Confessor be overlooked. not the Abbey his?

Yes, it is his. And yet, years and years before him, there was a Church of St. Peter here. And of his Abbey it is not easy to trace the ancient vestiges: bases of old pillars here and, somewhere else, a few old stones. It is older and it is newer than Edward the Confessor: and still, Westminster Abbey is his, rather than Henry III.'s or Richard Whittington's or another's. And in something the same way the Psalms are still

the Psalms of David.

When you ask, Who made our Psalms? you are asking a question a little like the question, Who built this Abbey? A people built it, generation after generation. Look at different parts of it, and you will feel, it grew

in different ages.

This collection of a hundred and fifty Psalms is now divided into five books. And those who can speak with authority of such things, say that when they look into these five books they can trace here various collections: a very old collection, iii.-xli., for example; another, li.-lxxii.; others, xlii.-xlix.; and l. with lxxiii.-lxxxiii.

These are old collections which, with other Psalms,

were included in a final collection, completed by the

addition of the sixty-one Psalms, xc.-cl.

We can accept the decisions of the scholars, as we should accept the decisions of architects who know the difference between Saxon and Early English and Tudor building.

You will have, first, to divide the Psalms into two, at Psalm xc. And, among the first eighty-nine Psalms, you will find those three collections I spoke of, and other Psalms. And you will want to know, How old do they

think those oldest collections?

You will be told that there are Psalms, here, of very great antiquity, but even the collections which are earliest are, as a whole, not nearly so "Davidic" as,

maybe, "we should like to think."

Think of Ezra and Nehemiah, after the Captivity, building up a Jewish Society which was the result of all the endurance and prayer and thought of the Exile. They taught a law which they called "Moses" Law, but which was the result of Amos and Jeremiah and Ezekiel as well as Moses. And, in the same way, the Jewish people may have come back with a collection of Psalms—for example, iii.-xli.—which they called David's Psalms, but which were the result of many men's thought and feeling: an exile people's Songs of Sion, old and new.

This collection of "Psalms of David" dates from

about Ezra's time.

And so with those other three collections. The collection (Psalms 1., lxxiii.-lxxxiii.) called the Psalms of Asaph is dated after Ezra and Nehemiah had done their work. And the collection xc.-cl., it seems, was not finished until after the Maccabee victories against the Syrian Greeks in 165 B.C.

And you will be no wiser, if you wander about among the Psalms thinking they are all the Songs of David the sweet singer of Israel, than if you wandered about in the Abbey thinking it all a thousand years old, and

Edward the Confessor's work.

Let me choose out some among the many sentences of the Psalms which, thanks partly to the English of Miles Coverdale, linger in the memory, and return in beauty to it, winning our reverence and love.

(xxi. 2, 3) "Thou hast given him his heart's desire:

and hast not denied him the request of his lips.

"For thou shalt prevent him with the blessings of goodness: and shalt set a crown of pure gold upon his head."

(xxv. 5, 6, 10) "Call to remembrance, O Lord, thy tender mercies: and thy lovingkindnesses, which have been ever of old.

"O remember not the sins and offences of my youth:

but according to thy mercy think upon me. . .

"For thy name's sake, O Lord: be merciful unto my

sin, for it is great."

(xxxi. 22) "Thou shalt hide them privily by thine own presence from the provoking of all men: thou shalt keep them secretly in thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues."

(lxxii. 13) "He shall be favourable to the simple and

needy: and shall preserve the souls of the poor."

(lxxiv. 5, 6) "... Thine adversaries ... set up their banners for tokens ... they break down all the carved work thereof: with axes and hammers."

And cxxii. 1, 8, 9, to choose one out of all those last sixty-one Psalms: "I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the Lord..." down to—

"For my brethren and companions' sakes: I will

wish thee prosperity.

"Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God: I

will seek to do thee good."

You have six quotations. We might have made sixty. Every one has, I suppose, their own haunting phrases: their favourite words. But look at these six. Psalm xxi. is one of the older Psalms of the oldest collection. There is a King. And we and he are giving thanks together. It belongs to a time when the actual King has a certain heavenly glamour.

Psalm xxv., one of the Psalms said to be "of David," belongs to a very different and much later time. It makes you think, rather, of Isaiah xl.-lv. It is in the

mood of the suffering servant of the Lord. If you were trying to feel what Israel has been going through in order to reach the mood of Isaiah xl.-lv., Psalm xxv. would help you to understand.

Or, again, Psalm xxxi. leads your feeling back to Jeremiah. Think of Jeremiah and of the times before Israel came out of his grief and agony, and you find the

spirit of such a time in that thirty-first Psalm.

My next was lxxii., the favourite Psalm of St. Athanasius, the Psalm of some coronation: we do not know of which king. But we know that, to Athanasius, it seemed a crown which One Head only could fitly wear. It is among the later collection of Psalms, or rather Prayers, "of David." But it reminds you of Isaiah lvi.-lxvi. The date for that was hazarded as about 440 B.C.: a time when there was no visible King, except in the vision of Israel. It is a vision seen in a light which never was on land or sea.

But when you come to Psalm lxxiv., what a storm has broken on our real sea and land. There is an army of "adversaries" in the very "sanctuary." There are "houses of God"—synagogues—in the land which "they have burnt up": "O let not the simple go away ashamed: but let the poor and needy give praise unto thy name." Who are these "thine enemies" who roar? Professor Robertson Smith, the scholar who knew most about Israel's history, suggests that here is some storm of which no record is left. This is some unrecorded Persian vengeance. About 350 B.C., per-

haps, he thinks.

And the last quotation was from cxxii. It gives you the mood of the men who gathered the older collections together, and added a collection of their own: a collection including many which were specially made for the use of Levite singers in Temple services. They included this, which is clearly a pilgrim's Psalm, one of a collection of pilgrim songs which came to be called the Songs of Degrees, from the "degrees" or the "steps" from the lower court up into the higher court in the Temple, whereon the Levites stood to sing them. But the Psalms (cxx.-cxxxiv.), at first, were really sung

round camp-fires, or came sounding across the still harbour-waters from the ship, the songs of pilgrims from all the lands drawing nearer to Zion by "degrees" or

"stages" of their pilgrimage.

These six quotations, taken almost at a hazard, touch various points of a history of perhaps six hundred years. It matters less that we should know at what points we are touching that history, than that we should feel ourselves to be the heirs of so wonderful an experience. He who says the Psalms is, almost unconsciously, slipping into the company of many generations of human souls whom God has been teaching.

The Spirit of these hymns is an undying Spirit, wise with the wisdom of age after age. It has, there, in xxi. the freshness and eagerness of Youth, perhaps.

Like a boy who has had success at school,

Not when the sense is dim But now from a heart of joy, . . . Take the thanks of a boy.

And then through what a long discipline do we come out again into thanksgiving, the same and yet different, in Psalm lxxii. (cf. Isaiah lx.).

"The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give

presents:

"The kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts.

"He shall defend the poor, . . . he shall deliver the poor . . .

"He shall be favourable to the simple and needy:

and shall preserve the souls of the poor . . ."

Through how many forlorn hours of failure and despair has this hope lived. Their King is the Messiah: one to whom in soberest truth His poor subjects may say: "O King, live for ever." But through what a chastening the hopeful boy has grown to the hope of a strong, wise man.

Psalms xxxi. and xxv. suggest what the chastening

has been.

Psalm xxxi. gives the mood of one (like Jeremiah) despised and rejected, "mine acquaintance"...
"they that did see me without conveyed themselves

from me"... "as a dead man," forgotten, like a broken potsherd. So far is he from the "crown of pure gold upon his head."

Yet he clings with all his heart to God, and trusts.

"Shew thy servant the light of thy countenance: and save me for thy mercies' sake." Israel is learning about the servant of the Lord, even in that darkest hour.

And Psalm xxv. we compared to Isaiah xl. rather than to Jeremiah. The servant is confessing the sins of the past, and also the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, which have been ever of old.

He dwells now, as a habit, in the secret of the Lord. There is a hope of perfectness and righteous dealing. You hear it in that call, "Deliver Israel, O God, out of all his troubles."

It is on hearts that have watched like this that the light of the coming Messiah can arise and shine. after such a discipline that Psalm lxxii. could be made; a Psalm singing, long before, as St. Athanasius felt long after, words which are true of the Christ. poets who included this among their collection are dated after Ezra and Nehemiah, and before Alexander and Antiochus. They have a vision, uninfluenced by the Maccabees, of a king who is divine and king of all mankind.

When you reach Psalms xc.-cl. you are in a treasury

of gold and silver words of praise.

These last Psalms have given to the Psalter, as a whole, the sound of a ringing thanksgiving; for God's goodness and "mercy" which "endureth for ever"; for the exodus out of Egypt: for the passover service, the sacrifice of (cxxxv. 13) "thy memorial, O Lord, from one generation to another ": for the men who have made atonement, Moses His chosen who stood before Him, and Phinehas who prayed (cvi. 30).

Only open a Concordance and count: "praise," 103 times; "praises," 17 times; "joy," "shout for joy," "joyful," 49 times; "rejoice," "rejoiceth," "rejoicing," 55; "sing," "singing," "song," "songs," 37.

It is a weighty argument against low spirits that so

long and varied an experience could result in music like this being sung by so sensitive a race. It is more than any argument. It is an inspiration. The summary of Israel's life in communion with God is thanksgiving—yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful.

That is why it is a hymn-book ready for the Church of the New Testament. The Christian Church also has "a memorial from one generation to another," a service instituted at the Passover with the singing of a Psalm (one of the Psalms cxiii.-cxviii.). (Mark xiv. 26) "And when they had sung an hymn they went out."

The Jewish thankfulness passes into the Christian thankfulness, as the Jewish sacrifice passes into the Christian Sacrifice. Continuity could scarcely be more

unbroken.

For of the meaning of sacrifice, also, these Psalm-makers were learning, and can teach. "Yea, in the darkness and the place of dragons." What sacrifice means is told in those words, "Lo, I come to do thy will," an offering of which whole burnt offerings were parables: a sacrifice as human as the love of a man for his friend or his brother: as human as the sorrow of "one that mourneth for his mother."

Often, as we look at the moods of Israel in the Psalms, we see the Cross, we see the face of the Christ crucified. And often, too, we see there the Christ ascended. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."

That countenance is, over and over again, seen dimly

or seen clearly in the Psalms.

The anguish of the Atonement is hinted at. And then again, in amazing proximity to that anguish, the joyous certainty of triumph.

Look, for example, at Psalm xxii. It was quoted on

the Cross, you remember.

Sometimes it is a young King that we see, the crown of pure gold upon his head. And sometimes it is Isaiah's vision as of a wan face, a head crowned with thorns. And they are one.

When I survey the wondrous cross, Where the young Prince of glory died . . .

The Psalms rise to so high a height that they are

speaking of this. And yet, in that altitude, how steadily

they move, how disciplined they are.

The lifetime of a people has disciplined them. They are the work of a hundred poets; the selection from six hundred years of poetry. It is this long experience of theirs that makes them feel so strong as you use them, so that your mind leans on them, and knows they will not give way.

It is the disciplined heart of a multiude, tried by mul-

titudinous experience, that speaks here.

If a passionate voice is heard, it is heard speaking as a memory. Yes! men feel thus! speak thus! and to remember it is to be purified (as the wise man said of

tragedy) by old pities and old fears.

This multitude of human hearts, become one human heart, is a heart disciplined by all human life. It is Man, I will say, speaking in the Presence of God. Living Man, here, is speaking to the living God, who hears, who understands, who cares.

Life (it was said) begins from such simple origins. Here, after so long a process of evolution, you are listening to what Life has become articulate to say. If you desire to hear all its meaning, where will you come nearer that, than when you sit in meditation, within sound of the Psalms? As someone might sit and listen to the sound of the sea and the voice of its many waters. so sit and listen.

And yet there is, in this sounding sea of the Psalms, the calm of that great discipline. They lead the thoughts of a man beside still waters. They are the heart of Man answering, mirroring, reflecting, God: "as in the water face answereth to face. . . .

The Spirit of God moves upon the face of these waters. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession . . . and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."







